



Video Message by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)

President of the Economic and Social Council

Twelfth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development Bangkok

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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address the Twelfth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. Your work at the regional level is integral in translating our international commitments to the country and local level. This year, the High-Level Political Forum will review progress on 5 SDGs: SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 14 on life below water, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

In this review, we must recognize our achievements and identify areas where we need to intensify our efforts.

For example, achieving SDG 5 will require us to tackle violence against women and girls, systemic discrimination, and unequal access to education and healthcare. Alarmingly, one in five girls still marries before the age of 18, and 230 million women have been subjected to female genital mutilation. Moreover, women's political participation remains limited, with only 26.9 per cent of seats in national parliaments worldwide occupied by women.

On SDG 8, we must recognize that productive employment and decent work are catalysts for achieving the other SDGs. For workers,



adaptability, access to technology, and lifelong learning are required to help them navigate a rapidly evolving workplace.

Excellencies,

In July 2025, thirty-nine countries – including 12 ESCAP members – will present their voluntary national reviews at the HLPF. This strong number demonstrates the region's commitment to evidence-based follow-up and shared learning in pursuit of the SDGs.

Partnerships, both within and beyond the Asia-Pacific region, are crucial to the success of the 2030 Agenda. Collaboration among governments, civil society, the private sector, and international organizations will be essential for driving sustainable development forward.

The Summit of the Future's outcomes provide a roadmap for advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Pact and its annexes include commitments to an SDG Stimulus, a review of the sovereign debt architecture, and reform of the global financial architecture. It also commits to bolstering peace and security, renewing human rights commitments, and harnessing the benefits of AI for all.

By facilitating knowledge exchange and discussions on tailored policy solutions, these regional forums enhance the HLPF's effectiveness.

I wish you a successful forum and look forward to seeing its outcomes contribute to the HLPF.

Thank you.