

LEVERAGING OCEAN RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report



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FOREWORD

This *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report* examines how small island developing States could accelerate their progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by making better use of their vast ocean resources and the blue economy. More than a quarter of our member States in the Asia-Pacific region are small island developing States. These States are a diverse group of countries that differ in size of their national economies, landmass, populations and level of development.

Supporting these States to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an essential component of the mandate of ESCAP. Doing so is particularly important considering that, even before the COVID-19 pandemic erupted, these States were on track to reach only infrastructure-related Goal 9 and Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production. While for many Goals insufficient data availability makes it difficult to gauge progress, the likely impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these economies could be to disrupt these trends and push States even further from reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. COVID-19 has made the need for accelerated action to achieve all the Goals by 2030 even more urgent.

An important impediment to their progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals is the narrow resource base on land that these States face. This reality limits their ability to provide employment and decent work for all, which are critical elements to reach many of the other Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, these economies have regressed on achieving Goal 8, which is focused on promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth. While the COVID-19 pandemic is still under way, it is already evident that many of these economies will regress further in this area.

While small island developing States tend to cover only small areas of land, these States have – under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea – exclusive rights to exploration and use of marine resources in zones covering 200 nautical miles from their shores. For several small island developing States, these exclusive economic zones exceed their land area by many thousand times. Making better use of these vast ocean resources and the blue economy could provide these States with the means to accelerate their progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

This report highlights that implementation of the 2030 Agenda entails ensuring sustainable use of existing ocean resources and developing sectors that provide productive employment and close links to the local economy and local populations. In doing so, it focuses on two sectors which stand to gain most from these vast ocean resources: fisheries and tourism. Although these sectors, especially tourism, are being significantly affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, they remain among the most important sectors for many small island developing States in terms of their contribution to output and their importance for livelihoods.

While small island developing States can do more to embrace their blue economy to foster their sustainable development, this report emphasizes that greater regional cooperation is an important element for creating an enabling framework. Regional cooperation is especially important given the nature of fisheries as a common property resource.

I hope this report contributes to our collective push to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in small island developing States.



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and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

Analyses in the *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report* are based on data and information available up to the end of March 2020.

Groupings of countries and territories/areas referred to in the present issue of the Report are defined as follows:

- Countries with special needs – least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.
- ESCAP region:
 - ESCAP member States – Afghanistan; Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; Georgia; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Micronesia (Federated States of); Mongolia; Myanmar; Nauru; Nepal; New Zealand; Pakistan; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Tuvalu; Uzbekistan; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam;
 - Associate members – American Samoa; Cook Islands; French Polynesia; Guam; Hong Kong, China; Macao, China; New Caledonia; Niue; and Northern Mariana Islands.
- Developing ESCAP region – ESCAP region excluding Australia, Japan and New Zealand.
- Developed ESCAP region – Australia, Japan and New Zealand.
- Least developed countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
- Landlocked developing countries – Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- Small island developing States:
 - ESCAP member States – Fiji, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu;
 - Associate members – American Samoa, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Niue and Northern Mariana Islands.
- Pacific – American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
- Due to the limited availability of data, associate members of ESCAP are excluded from the analysis in the Report unless otherwise indicated.
- For the purposes of this Report, Singapore is not considered to be a small island developing State because of its high level of development and high-income status, and for simplicity of analysis.

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Growth rates are on an annual basis, except where indicated otherwise.

Reference to “tons” indicates metric tons.

References to dollars (\$) are to United States dollars, unless otherwise stated.

The term “billion” signifies a thousand million. The term “trillion” signifies a million million.

In the tables, two dots (..) indicate that data are not available or are not separately reported; a dash (–) indicates that the amount is nil or negligible; and a blank indicates that the item is not applicable.

In dates, a hyphen (-) is used to signify the full period involved, including the beginning and end years, and a stroke (/) indicates a crop year, fiscal year or plan year.