



## Plenary Session 2

# PURSuing A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs), SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES AND WELL-BEING

### 1 Context/Rationale

The aim of this session was to frame overall discussions on sustainable and inclusive development in the region at ISAP sessions from the view point of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the context of Asia. Rio+20 in 2012 agreed to develop SDGs. Since then, many stakeholders are involved in the discussion about SDGs towards final agreement in September 2015.

### 2 Objectives

- Introduction of current international discussion on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Discussion on key topics that will lead Asia into sustainable development such as sustainable consumption and production, sustainable lifestyle and well-being.

### 3 List of Speakers

#### [Moderator]

**Hideyuki Mori** President, IGES

#### [Keynote Speakers]

**Shamshad Akhtar** Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

**Kaveh Zahedi** Regional Director and Representative,  
United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UNEP-ROAP)

**Toru Fukushima** President, Fukushima / Unite co., Ltd.

#### 4 Key Messages

- **Collaboration between UNESCAP, UNEP and IGES to be very important for pursuing sustainability in this region with ISAP playing a leading role in agenda setting and improved communications on discussions on sustainable development in Asia.**
- **SDGs are a revolutionary process that looks at the integrated development of social, economic, and environmental dimensions.**
- **Meeting the forthcoming SDGs, which form the new roadmap for the future, will require playing by a new set of rules to better involve civil society, the private sector and finance.**
- **Various concepts such as low-carbon, sound material cycle society, or biodiversity are not easily linked to the actual lives of each citizen so there needs to be real communication between consumers and producers.**

#### 5 Summary of Presentation

The session started with a key-note speech by Shamshad Akhtar who considered collaboration between UNESCAP and IGES to be very important for pursuing sustainability in this region. She expressed her expectation for ISAP to play a leading role in agenda setting and improved communications on discussions on sustainable development in Asia. She then introduced recent discussions on SDGs at the global level as well as at Asia-Pacific regional level. She mentioned that this was a critical juncture in the evolution of sustainable development. Firstly, the SDGs process is revolutionary in that it discusses and examines possible forward-looking goals specifically focusing on sustainable development. The process no longer looks at social, economic, and environmental development as separate issues but promotes integrated development of these three dimensions. In July, the Open Working Group (OWG) produced its final report on the SDGs with 17 goals and more than 150 concrete targets. In parallel, there is another UN process taking place with the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing due to submit its recommendations. In relation to implementation of the SDGs, five different UN regional commissions will coordinate and prioritise specific agendas for each different region.



In this regard, UNESCAP represents the diverse Asia-Pacific region. In May, the regional forum on Sustainable Development (SD) was held in Thailand and is expected to be held regularly in the future. Looking at the SD agenda first of all, the essential elements are prioritisation of poverty eradication, narrowing inequality, changing unsustainable patterns of growth, protecting the natural resource base, with additional emphasis at the Asia-Pacific regional level to pursuing sustained and inclusive economic growth. Secondly, there needs to be promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, thirdly, resilience to multiple shocks and disasters, fourthly, a response to population dynamics and urbanisation, fifthly, progress in natural resource management, and finally regional integration. Representatives also discussed about means of implementation for SDGs, focusing on financing for development, science and technology, trade, capacity building partnership, and governance for transformation towards sustainable development. In 2011, UNESCAP and IGES collaborated to reflect the voices of Asia-Pacific region to Rio+20 process by utilising ISAP and the hope is that ISAP will continue to play a similar role in the implementation process of SDGs in the region. Following the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development held in 2005, where the major outcome was the emphasis in green growth, UNESCAP is organising another ministerial conference. Among the advanced cases in green growth, China has changed its standards of measurement for economic development. The Republic of Korea has published a low-carbon national strategy. Indonesia is also implementing sector-specific low-carbon roadmaps. Japan can also share many lessons and experiences so the partnership with Japan is very important to UNESCAP. UNESCAP would like to contribute to agenda-setting, implementation, lifestyle and consumption changes along with SDGs in collaboration with research networks of low-carbon development.

Kaveh Zahedi stated that a transformation of our collective understanding of sustainable development has been observed in the recent international discussions related to sustainability. The recently held UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA) emphasised the need to construct a post-2015 agenda in way that truly integrates the environment with social and economic development and the Assembly reaffirmed a new game plan for integrating poverty eradication as well as protecting the environment and promoting inclusive social and economic development in harmony with nature. This can be a revolutionary conceptual change in sustainability. However, the old growth-driven game is still prominent. TEEB business coalition estimated that the top 100 environmental externalities of business are costing the global economy around USD 4.7 trillion each year. Fossil fuel consumption subsidies are still massive, compared to investments in renewable energy, which all has an adverse effect on the transition to a clean



energy future. Unless economic growth is “decoupled” from natural resources consumption, we will soon face serious sustainability challenges. These impacts are particularly prominent in rapidly developing Asia. Countries in the region will only be able to address their development and poverty reduction priorities by reducing pollution, increasing resilience to disasters, promoting cleaner, more efficient energy, better managing forests and natural capital, creating livable cities and increasing food security. That is why there needs to be a new game for Asia-Pacific and sustainability. To address this, countries in Asia have started to move towards a green economy on a scale and at a speed that puts more emphasis on green growth, low-carbon low emissions and resilient development. There is a major unfinished sustainable development agenda in the Asia Pacific and to address the challenges of humankind on a global scale, there is a need to simultaneously achieve growth, inclusiveness, protection and preservation. Sustainable development will not hamper inclusive economic growth, it will be the driver, and give more people in the Asia Pacific the opportunities they deserve. Meeting the forthcoming SDGs, which form the new roadmap for the future, will require playing by a new set of rules to better involve civil society, the private sector and finance. Partnerships between the UN and Japan including IGES will continue to be of great benefit to Asia.

This was followed by Toru Fukushima who stated that his position was to facilitate real communication between consumers and producers. His company put a great deal of effort into improving communications with real producers such as communities of vegetable farmers. Based on his real-life experience, he felt that various concepts such as low-carbon, sound material cycle society, or biodiversity are not easily linked to the actual lives of each citizen. Although Japan is a rich country in terms of economy and environment, he often feels Japanese society has started to lose its balance. Through management of a supermarket company, he put emphasis on collaboration between producers and consumers. This is because recent economic trends tend to divide and promote dis-communication among different players in the supply chain. Dis-communication can cause major stress and loss in a society in many ways. To tackle this challenge of improving communication, he believes the concept of “oishii (delicious)” is important. Developing citizens’ capacity to evaluate and enjoy really “oishii” products would enrich their lifestyles and promote happiness. For the right choice of “oishii” products, knowledge, experience, and skills are needed. The development of the right environment for a family’s food choices is a key issue. Keeping this in mind would eventually result in resource conservation. A changing awareness of the market would result in real changes in consumption and production. Total collaboration from production, sales, to consumption is necessary, with the key to improvement being communication. He stated that he would like to contribute to fill the gap between conceptual discussions and real life.



## 6 Summary of Discussion

In response to the question on how green growth can be realised in synergies between environment and economy and what are the keys for the Asian economy to become more sustainable, Shamshad Akhtar replied that the world has been focused on growth from one side and has not considered natural and resource basis for growth. Green growth is about changing the game to quality growth, considering environmental and resource basis for the growth. Further, the world has focused too much on short-term objectives. We know that there is a trade-off between short term objectives and long-term objectives of the development. We know that we can secure longer-term sustainable growth by sacrificing some part of short-term rapid economic growth. Thirdly, the traditional economic growth model has been focusing on macro-economic balance and the past trend. What we need from now on is a more dynamic general equilibrium model integrating the different sectors and taking into consideration natural resources. In the long-term, this kind of inclusive model would be able to consider the impact of natural resource depletion as well as the impact from technology innovation. Then Kaveh Zahedi replied about decoupling and emphasised the human element. He said that it is very important to integrate theory and reality, as well as policy and actual fields. He added that global warming is not a problem itself but it impacts human and society matters. Decoupling is about making the existing products with fewer resources and less pollution. He added that human behaviour can change the situation, for example by eating seasonal fruits and vegetables.

In response to the question on the impact of trade liberalisation and globalisation on the food, Toru Fukushima answered that life is based on local life so a local supermarket can change the world through localised shopping by empowering local consumers as well as local producers. To this end, it is essential to organise an environment for local production. One may be able to influence the world by similar approach through internationalised trade. However, local capacities and potentials tend to get overlooked when making changes and providing well-being.

There was then a question on how to maximise the potential of the 3R approach in developing countries and ways for the international community to overcome barriers for international 3R activities, as well as ways to minimise throw-away products such as disposable plastic bags. Toru Fukushima commented on reuse, and explained that there are some successful businesses in Japan. For food-related issues, more consideration must be given to the spirit of MOTTAINAI (no wastefulness). Respecting a product can result in many positive effects. He stated that he tried to stop using plastic bags in his stores but this resulted in a significant drop in sales so the government should play a role to ensure competition is fair through policy intervention. Kaveh Zahedi replied that Japan can share much of its experience in terms of technology as well as behaviour. 3Rs in waste is recognised as an important issue in international discussion. For example, waste issues are linked with climate issue, and there are similar challenges associated with e-waste, so there needs to be an integral way of thinking about sustainability. Discussion must focus on how to construct a circular economy from the view point of greening the whole supply chain. Shamshad Akhtar added that it is important to focus not only on the management of one type of product but to change human behaviour and the role of education is crucial in this regard.