

Historic' accord at UN forum moves Asia-Pacific countries towards regional economic community



Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary Noeleen Heyzer. Photo: ESCAP

23 December 2013 – Thirty-six Asia-Pacific nations unanimously adopted a landmark declaration at a United Nations forum of ministers in Thailand, outlining the road map towards a regional economic community.

The move, called an “historic and defining moment” in the history of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) by its head, brings partners closer to ensure that “this will truly be the Asia-Pacific century.”

The ‘Bangkok Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific’ was adopted by top Government leaders, ministers and senior officials at a meeting organized by ESCAP on 20 December in the Thai capital.

“This declaration holds the promise of region-wide cooperation and policy-making in finance, connectivity, and addressing shared vulnerabilities,” said Under-Secretary-General and Economic and ESCAP Executive Secretary Noeleen Heyzer.

It aims “to build an integrated market, seamless transport and energy connectivity, financial cooperation, and enhance resilience to address vulnerabilities and risks of natural disasters.” The Bangkok Declaration consists of four main action areas: bringing down trade barriers and moving towards other forms of

market integration; enhancing financial cooperation including short-term liquidity support; increasing cooperation to address shared vulnerabilities and risks; connecting transport, energy and information and communications technology in the region.

Earlier this year, Ms. Heyzer emphasized the need to build more resilient economic communities, and form greater partnerships between regions and countries in the Southern hemisphere: “The true opportunity of a rising Asia-Pacific is to change the idea of progress – to prove that people and planet prosper best together.”

Last week’s meeting came as [Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#) was in the Philippines to scale up support for the massive typhoon recovery. He noted that the Government-led effort is helping millions of people rebuild their lives must be underpinned by measures to improve the country’s preparedness and resilience to natural disasters.

During the three-day visit, Mr. Ban also called on the donor community to step up support for an overall four year plan that will help to revive livelihoods and rebuild large swaths of the archipelago that were destroyed on 8 November when Super Typhoon Haiyan swept ashore, killing nearly 6,000 people and displacing millions more.

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