



## CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS IN ASIA

4-5 October 2023, UN Conference Centre, Bangkok Thailand

The regional conference on **Corporate Sustainability and Environmental Rights in Asia** will bring together selected business leaders, investors, policy makers, academics, and civil society champions to exchange views on the role of businesses and governments in supporting and strengthening the newly recognized **right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment**. Importantly, the conference will also facilitate learning and dialogue around emerging regulatory norms involving biodiversity impacts and disclosure, environmental and human rights due diligence, decarbonization strategies and carbon markets, and ESG reporting.

### Asia in Transition

Following the **COP27 Climate Change Conference and the COP15 Conference on Biological Diversity**, business leaders and investors in Asia are better placed to amplify actions to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. Today, business leaders understand that they must embrace and embed practices and policies which respond to Asia's environmental priorities. But while some enterprises are already taking active measures to lower carbon and methane emissions, reduce deforestation risks in their supply chains, and embrace circular economy principles, there remains significant scope to reinvent, innovate and drive action on corporate sustainability in the region. What is the state of play on corporate action, including ESG investment in Asia? What are tools, mechanisms and incentives emerging from these global climate/environmental frameworks that businesses can use to advance their actions in these areas? Who is leading in sustainability practice and what are some initial results? Importantly, what is on the horizon and where are the blind spots?

Increasingly, sustainability professionals recognize that a level playing field will be necessary to drive practice at scale. With this in mind, action from government to ensure data transparency, policy coherence and environmental rule of law will be key. Some governments in Asia are now taking steps to strengthen environmental laws and policies, to improve implementation and enforcement measures, and to enhance vehicles for public participation in environmental decision-making, in alignment with international trends.

Signaling a growing consensus among states, the UN General Assembly passed an historic resolution in July of 2022, recognizing the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.<sup>1</sup> This resolution followed quickly on the heels of a UN Human Rights Council resolution recognizing the same, in October of 2021.<sup>2</sup> These "twin resolutions" as they are often called, on the right to a healthy environment (RHE)

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations General Assembly resolution 76/300, *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment*, A/RES/76/300 (26 July 2022)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council resolution 48/13, *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment*, A/HRC/RES/48/13 (8 October 2021)



have given additional, much-needed impetus to the work of promoting responsible business practices in Asia. But what does RHE and its relationship with environmental rule of law mean for business in the region, and how can it be translated into action by governments? What role, too, does the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP) play, as increasing numbers of governments adopt national action plans to support UNGP implementation?

Hosted by UNDP and UNEP, the regional conference on Corporate Sustainability and Environmental Rights in Asia will explore efforts undertaken so far by states and business to address Asia's environmental priorities. These include, mitigating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, addressing adverse climate impacts, protecting nature, eliminating and reversing biodiversity loss, and mitigating air and water pollution, among others. In so doing, the conference will explore the advantages for business in adopting policies which promote and protect the right to a healthy environment. Further, the conference will examine current practices in decarbonization efforts, biodiversity loss assessments and disclosures, and good practices in addressing air and water pollution, and ensuring just transitions in the renewable energy space. The conference will also identify gaps and space for collaboration between partners on wider, more controversial subjects including, loss and damage and the "[30 by 30 plan](#)" for nature conservation. A mix of exchanges on environmental rule of law topics, and deeper dives in regulatory practice will motivate a constructive dialogue among different stakeholders on opportunities for business to deliver on environmental and broader ESG commitments.

### Conference outcomes

The regional conference on Corporate Sustainability and Environmental Rights in Asia will facilitate learning and dialogue around the role of business in strengthening the right to a healthy environment. Four outcomes are contemplated: 1) better understanding among business actors and experts on ways to reduce impacts on climate and the environment; 2) constructive dialogue between business, government and civil society on business policy formation, emerging regulatory requirements and enforcement measures; ; 3) stronger uptake by civil society, media and youth on specific environmental and climate-related priorities and; 4) greater awareness of the potential positive contribution of business in addressing these priorities in a just and sustainable way. Overall, the conference will result in a wider understanding of the applicability and utility of the right to a healthy environment, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and Environmental rule of law principles to resolve a host of sustainability-related matters facing the people of Asia.

If successful, the conference on Corporate Sustainability and Environmental Rights in Asia will occur yearly and seek to refine outcomes as time progresses. In preparation of future events, committees may be formed around specific issues that tailor conversations to issues relevant to upcoming global conferences (Conference of the Parties) on climate change and biodiversity.

### Who we are:

#### United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP is the United Nations global development network, present in over 170 countries and territories. UNDP's mandate is to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and exclusion, and achieve sustainable



development. Since 2016, UNDP’s “Business and Human Rights in Asia” (B+HR Asia) programme has been partnering with government, business, and civil society leaders in Asia to promote the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). As the world’s most authoritative, normative framework guiding responsible business practice, the UNGPs provide an agreed pathway for governments and business to address business-related environmental and human rights risks and impacts. In pursuit of a responsible business agenda in the region, B+HR Asia has been a leading partner on corporate sustainability, producing reports, providing grants, training business, and advising governments, including on respect for the environment.

### **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

UNEP is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda; promotes the coherent implementation of environmental dimensions of sustainable development within the UN system; and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. UNEP’s mandate in the field of environmental law is to lead the United Nations System in the development and implementation of environmental rule of law with attention at all levels, including access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) supports the upholding of the [right to a healthy environment](#) through The Environmental Rights Initiative which is a coalition of state and non-state actors united to promote, protect and respect environmental rights.



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### Agenda

DAY 1		Location
8.30 – 9:00	<b>Registration</b>	UNESCAP
9:00 –10:30	<b>Welcome, Keynote and Opening Plenary:</b> 'The Role of Business and the Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment'	Conference Room 3 Plenary 1
10:30 – 10:45	<b>Break</b>	
10:45 – 12:15	<b>Concurrent Session:</b> 'Clean Air in Asia: Sustainable Business Practices in Focus'	Conference Room 3 Concurrent session
10:45 – 12:15	<b>Concurrent Session:</b> 'A Just Transition towards Clean Energy in Asia'	Conference Room 4 Concurrent session
12:15 – 13:45	<b>Lunch</b>	
13:45 – 15:15	<b>Plenary:</b> 'A New Global Framework on Biodiversity and Nature: Implications for Asia'	Conference Room 3 Plenary 2
15:15 – 15:30	<b>Break</b>	
15:30– 17:00	<b>Concurrent Session:</b> 'Biodiversity and Nature: Approaches to Disclosures and Due Diligence'	Conference Room 3 Concurrent session
15:30– 17:00	<b>Concurrent Session:</b> 'Can ESG Uphold the Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in Asia?'	Conference Room 4 Concurrent session
DAY 2		Location
9:00 –10:30	<b>Plenary:</b> 'Climate Action: Trends and Challenges post-COP27'	Conference Room 3 Plenary 3
10:30 – 11:00	<b>Break</b>	



11:00 – 12:30	<b>Concurrent Session:</b> 'Climate Action 101: Emission Reduction Strategies'	Conference Room 3 Concurrent session
11:00 – 12:30	<b>Concurrent Session:</b> 'Clean Seas in Asia: Promising Approaches to Tackling Marine Pollution'	Conference Room 4 Concurrent session
12:30 - 14:00	<b>Lunch</b>	
14:00 - 15:30	<b>Concurrent Session:</b> 'Youth, Business and Climate Action: Bridging the Gap'	Conference Room 3 Concurrent session
14:00 - 15:30	<b>Concurrent Session:</b> 'Plastic Pollution in Asia: Business Models that Integrate a Rights-Based Approach Along the Plastic Value Chain'	Conference Room 4 Concurrent session
15:30 -16:30	<b>Closing Plenary</b>	Conference Room 3 Plenary 3
16:30 – 17:00	<b>Networking Coffee</b>	