

Original Paper

Environmental Sustainability through Environmental Impact Assessment Sustainable Projects in the Asia Pacific Region

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Abstract

The research paper “Environmental Sustainability through Environmental Impact Assessment Sustainable Projects in the Asia Pacific Region” is basically a study of environmental sustainability through environmental impact assessments of environmentally sustainable projects in the Asia Pacific region. The paper dwells into various aspects covering issues such as environmental sustainability, adoption of environmental impact assessment sustainable projects in the Asia Pacific region, role of Asian Development Bank in promoting environmental sustainability in the Asia Pacific region through adoption, promotion and financing of environmentally sustainable projects and projects implemented by the United Nations through its umbrella organization UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and EIA which is imperative for achieving environmental sustainability has been instrumental in integration of environmental considerations into development planning and decision making processes in the region. A detailed literature review has been undertaken by consulting various research papers, publications of authors of international repute, international organizations such as the United Nations, Asian Development Bank, UNEP etc., The study has tried to establish linkages between the EIA and the UN SDGs, identifying issues and their solutions in country related projects in the Asia Pacific region such as the energy transition mechanism in the Philippines, fostering low carbon connectivity and inclusive development, investing in climate-resilient and efficient utilities in Azerbaijan, clean energy potential, climate policy and sustainable finance in Indonesia and Mongolia, integrating specific components of climate resilience and environmental sustainability including investment in hydropower and grid infrastructure projects in Nepal; etc., The study highlights the important climate related challenges, risks and EIA challenges encountered in the Asia Pacific region. Last, but not the least, the policy conclusions have been drawn highlighting the fact that a robust EIA study would definitely entail in achieving environmentally sustainable projects in the Asia Pacific region which in turn would achieve environmental sustainability in the long-run thereby leading to achieving the UN SDGs by the turn of 2030.

Keywords

EIA, Environmental Sustainability, Environmental Governance, Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations

1. Introduction

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) serves as a vital tool responsible for integration of environmental considerations into developmental planning and decision-making processes. This is required particularly in the Asia Pacific region which are fast-track and emerging economies. This paper tries to assess the role and impact of EIA in promoting sustainable development by assessing its legal implications, practical implementation and its linkages and influence on environmental governance. It is learnt that a qualitative analysis of legal frameworks, international agreements, and case studies would be more effective in highlighting and analyzing the strengths and limitations of EIA systems worldwide including that of the sub-region. Though EIA has been successful enough to create awareness and averting environmental disasters, but, challenges on inadequate enforcement, weak public participation and political interference persist, which act as a deterrent in achieving environmental sustainability. Hence, the need of the hour is to strengthen institutional frameworks, enhance transparency and integrate climate resilience into the EIA systems to make it robust, dynamic and effective to entail achieving environmental sustainability. EIA, when effectively implemented, emerges as a vital mechanism for aligning developmental goals with ecological sustainability leading to alignment with UN SDGs thereby in turn achieving the UN SDGs by 2030. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMFR, Vol.7, Issue 4 July-August 2025; S.Mallappa - The Role of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in Sustainable Development'* – www.ijfmr.com).

There is a need to reconcile economic growth with environmental protection which is of paramount importance in the context of mounting ecological degradation, urban expansion, climate change and disaster risks concerns. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has not only emerged as an essential and effective tool that ensures developmental activities aligned with environmental sustainability, but also in achieving environmental governance in the long-run. EIA is an effective tool which involves a structured and systematic approach to predicting, evaluating and mitigating potential environmental impacts of proposed projects before they could be executed, particularly in the aftermath of the emerging Asia Pacific economies, given the multiple environmental challenges the region has been encountering in the environmental front. This tool has been instrumental in decision-making processes to make informed choices that prioritize both economic development and environmental integrity. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMFR, Vol.7, Issue 4 July-August 2025; S.Mallappa - The Role of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in Sustainable Development')*. (www.ijfmr.com)

2. Literature Review

EIA originated from the United States' National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (US Law on

Environmental Policy (NEPA 1969) and has since been incorporated into the legal systems of many nations. Scholars have analyzed EIA as a technical, participatory and policy tool for effective environmental governance. **Glasson et al. (2012)** conceptualize EIA as a process with political dimensions, advocating for transparency and inclusivity. **Jay et al. (2007)** critique its limited impact when excluded from early-stage decision-making. **Wood (2003)** identifies crucial elements of EIA such as scoping, baseline assessments and public consultation that influence its effectiveness. The Stockholm Conference held in the year 1972 highlights in its first principle “Man had the fundamental right to adequate condition of life, in an environment of a quality that permitted a life of dignity and well-being”. (*International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMFR, Vol.7, Issue 4 July-August 2025; S.Mallappa - The Role of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in Sustainable Development*). (www.researchgate.net)

The term, environment is a widely broader concept and is used to refer to water, air and land, and the interrelationships that exist between water, air, land, humans, other living beings, plants, micro-organisms and property. The given definition of environment is so broad that its scope includes all living beings including plants and micro-organisms and their relationship with water, air and land. (*International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMFR, Vol.7, Issue 4 July-August 2025; S.Mallappa - The Role of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in Sustainable Development*). (www.ijfmr.com)

3. Methodology and Analysis

The research paper employs a qualitative approach, utilizing legislative aspects, scholarly articles, and reports from reputed international institutions such as UNEP and the ADB to study EIA and environmental sustainability and its governance. Certain environmentally sustainable projects adopted by United Nations and country-strategy reports of ADB highlighting the developmental processes and financing of environmental projects in the Asia Pacific sub-region have been delineated. (*International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMFR, Vol.7, Issue 4 July-August 2025; S.Mallappa - The Role of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in Sustainable Development*). (www.ijfmr.com)

4. Legal and Institutional Frameworks of Environmental Governance

Coming to the legal and institutional frameworks of environmental governance, EIA procedures are mandatory in over 100 countries, often grounded in national legislation. However, internationally, frameworks such as the Espoo Convention and Aarhus Convention promote transboundary assessment and public engagement. Developmental finance institutions like the World Bank mandate EIA as part of environmental due diligence. Apart from World Bank, ADB also works on the aspects covering environmental safeguards, risks and its assessment through various projects being implemented by ADB in the Asia Pacific region. This makes EIA and its integration with environmental sustainability in the Asia Pacific region mandatory, a robust mechanism and effective tool in achieving environmental

governance in the region. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMFR, Vol.7, Issue 4 July-August 2025; S.Mallappa - The Role of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in Sustainable Development')* www.ijfmr.com

5. Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations

5.1 EIA Contributes Directly to Several SDGs, Including Goals 6, 13, 14 and 15.

5.2 It promotes resource conservation, pollution control and ecosystem protection. Integrating long-term environmental impacts into planning enables policy makers to achieve more resilient and inclusive growth. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMFR, Vol.7, Issue 4 July-August 2025; S.Mallappa - The Role of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in Sustainable Development')* www.ijfmr.com

6. Asian Development Bank Projects for Environmental Sustainability in the Asia Pacific

The following projects are implemented by ADB for environmental sustainability in the Asia Pacific region:

6.1 Energy Transition Mechanism in the Philippines

- a) Power generation in the Philippines is primarily privatized.
- b) More liberalized market with three main power grids: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.
- c) Coal Fired-Power Plant (CFPP) capacity accounts for about 44 percent of total installed capacity.
- d) Most CFPPs are concentrated in Luzon and owned by a few conglomerates.
- e) CFPPs can operate under merchant conditions, but many have bilateral power purchase agreements with distribution utilities.

6.2 Armenia's Road Map to Achieve Environmental Sustainability

Armenia prioritizes climate adaptation and resilience to address its vulnerability to climate impacts and disaster risks. The country has also adopted a National Adaptation Plan and several sector adaptation plans, with measures including upgrading irrigation systems, improving the performance of river basins and reservoirs, building new reservoirs, adopting climate-resilient crops, integrating climate-related knowledge in education and health, and revising design and construction guidelines to build a more resilient future. Armenia is also preparing a long-term low-emissions development strategy (until 2050) to guide priority investments toward high, sustainable, balanced, and equitable growth across all sectors. Armenia adopted a law in April 2025 to establish a comprehensive disaster risk management and population protection framework for Armenia, integrating prevention, preparedness, response and recovery for both natural and human-made hazards, including seismic risks.

7. Azerbaijan's Road Map to Achieve Environmental Sustainability

7.1 Fostering Low-carbon Connectivity and Inclusive Development

The Azerbaijan's government's priorities include establishing low-carbon transport connections to strengthen its regional logistics position and generate sustainable income prospects for underdeveloped regions. ADB, a multilateral regional developmental financial institution will support the modernization of rail connections including their digitalization, electrification and signalling in anticipation of the unblocking of regional transport gateways in the country. Advancing underdeveloped areas requires rebuilding essential climate and disaster-resilient infrastructure and showcasing innovation by creating zero-emission zones and sustainable management of natural capital. ADB will also explore opportunities for green mobility through railway, metro and road asset monetization projects in the country.

7.2 Addressing Urban Development Pressures

Azerbaijan is undergoing significant urban development. ADB's National Urban Assessment report highlights that rapid urbanization in Baku and inadequate urban planning in secondary cities have resulted in spatial inequalities. While Baku benefits from large-scale investments under the Baku 2040 Master Plan, other urban centres remain underserved and economically marginal. The government aims to decentralize urban development, requiring investments in sustainable infrastructure, affordable housing, waste management and energy efficiency. ADB is ready to support critical infrastructure development in secondary cities, focusing on transport, waste management, housing and water systems to balance growth.

8. Investing in Climate-resilient and Efficient Utilities

The Asia Pacific region and that of Azerbaijan is prone to natural disasters such as floods, tsunamis, cyclones etc., and is a water-scarce country with a high dependency ratio on transboundary waters. Water scarcity is accompanied by water system losses (about 50 percent). Water scarcity can aggravate regional disparities and disproportionately affect the rural and impoverished populations. In addition to desalination, non-revenue water management, including through performance-based non-revenue water contracts, water recycling, and conservation, are crucial for water security. ADB has been supporting the country in financing and implementation of environmentally sustainable projects. Integrating digital technologies such as Geographic Information System mapping, real-time monitoring systems, and underground water asset management can significantly enhance water resource management and disaster preparedness. In addition to water, ADB supports improving energy efficiency and implementing the Rational Use of Energy Resources and Energy Efficiency law that became effective in 2022. Energy generation from waste treatment and strategies to improve energy efficiency in utility systems offer scalable models that Azerbaijan can adopt. ADB will also work with the government on heating sector decarbonization and renewable heat integration. This would entail in achievement of environmental sustainability in the region.

9. Indonesia's Roadmap in Achieving Environmental Sustainability

9.1 Investing in Clean Energy Potential

ADB will support Indonesia's clean energy transition to spur growth and quality jobs, reduce air pollution and fortify its energy security. Comprehensive and extensive assistance includes policy reform to strengthen energy sector governance, investment in transmission and distribution infrastructure and new capacity in renewable geo-thermal, hydro, wind and solar energy. ADB is working with key stakeholders in the public and private sectors to unlock critical barriers to the energy transition by providing analytical and capacity development support for designing and implementing reform actions, pilot testing market-based approaches, and financing projects for renewable energy and power grid development. ADB's broad efforts to accelerate the energy transition leverage various initiatives in Indonesia to coordinate and integrate stakeholder engagement. Recognizing the scale of opportunities presented by the energy transition, ADB plans to expand its support, prioritizing renewable energy through public and private investment while exploring opportunities to improve energy efficiency. Knowledge transfer on innovative energy technologies will lay the foundation for future operations. ADB will support opportunities under the ASEAN Power Grid for domestic and regional interconnection projects, unlocking potential for clean energy development in the region.

10. Mongolia's Roadmap in Achieving Environmental Sustainability

10.1 Climate Policy and Sustainable Finance

ADB will support the Mongolian government to strengthen institutional and policy frameworks for climate action, primarily by advancing the implementation of Mongolia's climate policies and commitments, including the Nationally Determined Contribution, the National Adaptation Plan, and evolving climate legislation. This support will include policy advice, technical assistance, and policy-based lending to enhance institutional coordination, integrate climate criteria into investment planning and budgeting systems, and build capacity to develop a pipeline of climate investments. Priority sector reforms will focus on energy and agriculture. To mobilize sustainable finance, ADB will develop financial instruments and offer incentives to attract investment, including supporting carbon trading markets, improving access to green loans and bonds, and exploring sustainability-linked or nature bonds. Non-sovereign operations will complement sovereign initiatives, particularly by providing funding and guarantees to financial institutions to expand sustainable finance portfolios, as well as sustainable trade and supply chain finance. These efforts will leverage concessional funds and de-risk investments to catalyse private sector participation. Technical Assistance (TA) support will strengthen capacity of financial institutions in originating and monitoring green portfolios and improving environmental, social and governance systems.

10.2 In the energy sector, support will continue for regulatory and structural reforms, modernization of power systems, lower-emission electricity and heat generation, and energy efficiency improvements for public and private sectors. Key measures include boosting renewable energy capacity and energy storage,

increasing energy exports through cross-border power trade, digitizing and modernizing the power grid, improving energy efficiency and use, and advancing policy reforms. Non-sovereign loans to support renewable energy generation and storage projects will also be explored. The strategy also aims to transform State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and encourage private sector participation through renewable energy auctions and energy service companies.

10.3 Nepal's Roadmap in Achieving Environmental Sustainability

10.4 Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience of Infrastructure and Economic Transformation

Apart from mainstreaming, Asian Development Bank (ADB) will support the integration of specific components on climate resilience, Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and environmental sustainability into the objective and scope of various projects in the region. For support of implementation of the NDC, the country program includes investments in hydropower, grid infrastructure (to reduce transmission and distribution losses), and the promotion of clean public transport and logistic solutions such as ropeways and electric buses. For support of implementation of the NAP, the country program includes (i) support for flood-resistant and all-weather roads, (ii) integrated water resources management, (iii) development of year-round irrigation, (iv) flood risk management, (v) resilient urban and water supply development, (vi) eco-tourism, natural and cultural heritage; and (vii) disaster-resilient school buildings.

Further, ADB will explore the possibility of government and private sector access to carbon finance through greenhouse gas emission reduction (e.g. in e-mobility projects and promotion of e-cook stoves). ADB will also analyse rising multi-hazard risks in catchments to inform project design with a strong regional cooperation and integration dimension. The regional TA for Building Adaptation and Resilience in the Hindu Kush Himalayas will leverage technical knowledge from international partners to build the capacity of the government and the private sector in planning and designing climate-resilient infrastructure. This will improve Nepal's capacity for resilience and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) by developing comprehensive multi-hazard risk assessments, as well as de-risking and risk-transfer strategies.

ADB will also use sector specific investment and technical assistance to include support for environmental sustainability in projects, such as (i) increasing agricultural productivity through sustainable farming practices, (ii) restoring degraded watershed and protecting water sources, (iii) adopting nature-based solutions, (iv) promoting eco-tourism, and (v) supporting the use of more environment-friendly modes of public transport and cooking stoves.

11. Environment Development and Sustainability Transitions in the Asia Pacific

11.1 The Asia-Pacific region has adopted highly resource-intensive development pathways, and its impacts, including the harmful effects of climate change and environmental degradation, as well as unsustainable consumption and production are felt keenly across the region. Overcoming these environmental challenges requires deep sustainability transitions towards green, inclusive and resilient

development, grounded on regional collaboration and solidarity, and based on effective international environmental governance and multilateral processes.

11.2 Sustainability challenges are inherently complex. Risks from climate change and environmental degradation are increasingly converging with socio-economic threats and vulnerabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

11.3 Sustainability transitions need to be governed. There is an urgent need for national governments in the region to strengthen environmental governance, including promoting cross-sectoral collaboration, deep learning in institutions, engaging stakeholders, and adopting rights-based approach, futures thinking and system analysis in decision making. Furthermore, green growth, or environmentally sustainable economic growth, is an important strategy for balancing environmental and development needs in order to achieve sustainable development in the region. (*UNESCAP* – www.unescap.org)

12. Key climate-related Challenges and Risks Facing the Asia-Pacific Sub-region

Based on severity and scale of potential impact the country-wise challenges and risks facing the Asia Pacific region include:

12.1 Pacific Island Countries

- Land availability and usability are threatened by climate change, particularly by rising sea levels, with risk of submergence.
- Disasters are costing billions in economic damages, with climate and environmental hazards expected to significantly undermine incomes.
- Climate-induced migration and displacement are increasing, with relocation likely necessary for significant numbers of Pacific Islanders.

12.2 South Asia

- Climate change, environmental degradation and political tensions could exacerbate competition for transboundary resources, straining fragile interstate relations and risking conflict.
- Changing weather patterns are creating significant, adverse effects on agricultural sectors, undermining livelihoods and food security.
- Climate-induced migration and displacement will continue to rise, with migrants and IDPs facing further risks.
- Uptakes in critical mineral mining could boost economies but also drive instability and insecurity.

12.3 Central Asia and Afghanistan

- Climate change, environmental degradation and infrastructure decay are increasing competition for transboundary water resources, leading to conflict.
- Changing river flows, drought, and other climate and environmental hazards are likely to severely impact agricultural sectors, undermining livelihoods, food security and increasing migration.

- Climate and environmental impacts on livelihoods could see farmers turn to illicit economies, fuelling insecurity and conflict.
- Critical mineral reserves hold potential for economic development as well as geo-political, social and environmental risks.

12.4 South East Asia

- Extreme weather events are likely to affect millions annually, seeing knock-on security impacts in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.
- Increased temperatures, environmental degradation and exploitation could increase conflict over fish stocks.
- Reductions in water availability in rivers could see widespread impacts on livelihoods and food security.
- Critical mineral production threatens adverse social and environmental impacts.

12.5 East Asia

- Extreme weather events and disasters are likely to increase regionally, with the greatest risks for the most vulnerable.
- Critical mineral supply chains, necessary to fuel the green-energy transition, can also present challenges.

Keenly aware of the risks that climate change poses to the Asia-Pacific region, Member States and populations are undertaking a variety of efforts to address increasing challenges. To support these organic efforts and enhance the relevance and effectiveness of strategies, the following actions can be suggested to international and regional actors:

Ensure strategies to develop climate, peace and environmental resilience are tailored to local, national and sub-regional contexts.

- Ensure framings around climate-related risks are aligned with national priorities.
- Co-design mobility policies and programming with affected communities.
- Further develop context-specific research across sub-regions.
- Promote interstate cooperation to overcome climate-related risks and enhanced regional strength.
- Invest in data sharing on climate and environmental hazards.
- Support the development of a regional just transition framework.
- Further mainstream policies around climate, peace and environmental resilience in regional frameworks.
- Broaden the approach to climate-related risks and actions to overcome them in international institutions.
- Promote a shared understanding of climate-related risks across UN entities to support coordinated responses. Expand and strengthen international climate finance mechanisms.

(www.weatheringrisk.org - *Climate Peace and Environmental Resilience in Asia Pacific Region; June*

2025. Adelphi Global; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations.)

13. Challenges in EIA Implementation

13.1 Persistent obstacles include superficial assessments, conflict of interest in consultant selection, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, and exclusion of local communities. Additionally, post-clearance compliance remains weak, undermining the intent of the assessment. (*International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMFR, Vol.7, Issue 4 July-August 2025; S.Mallappa - The Role of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in Sustainable Development'* – www.ijfmr.com).

14. United Nations Projects on Environmental Sustainability in the Asia Pacific Region

United Nations (UN) is a global multilateral organization working towards the development and environmental sustainability of regions in the world, apart from addressing the various challenges that the national governments have been facing on aspects that are pressing and demanding such as global environmental governance, environmental justice, economic development, global peace, climate change, biodiversity, ecology among others. Taking these aspects into account and for the development of Asia Pacific region, UN has undertaken certain specific projects for the development of the region which are enumerated below:

- Improving Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Livelihoods within the Framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation project is funded by the China-UNEP Trust Fund and aims to enhance the adoption of an integrated ecosystem management approach in the Lancang-Mekong region by facilitating cooperation among countries, and across sectors, with ecosystem management for sustainable livelihood demonstrated through pilot activities at selected areas in Cambodia and China.
- UNEP is implementing a Japan-funded “Project for promoting the Minamata Convention on Mercury by making the most of Japan's knowledge and experiences” to support its member States in the implementation of the Convention. The project makes a special focus on the area of information exchange, awareness and education, and research, development and monitoring. A comprehensive programme is designed to strengthen enabling capacity, build on the resources in and around Minamata, and employ technologies held by institutions in Japan.
- Funded by the United Nations Development Account and implemented by UNEP, the project Strengthening ASEAN Member State Policies with Environmental Health Data on Costs of Inaction and Co-Benefits, aims to develop capacities and facilitate South-South cooperation around the use of data and tools to assess co-benefits and costs of inaction on environmental health issues, with a strong focus on air pollution. Through doing so it will support integrated and science-based policy interventions in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Thailand, and across the ASEAN region.
- The Counter Measure project works to identify sources and pathways of plastic pollution in river systems in Asia, particularly the Mekong and the Ganges. The project has developed plastic leakage models for localities in 6 different countries using an innovative and replicable approach. Deploying

technologies like GIS, machine learning and drones has allowed the Counter Measure team to augment ground-level research in an efficient and scalable way. This scientific knowledge can then be used to inform policy decisions and actions to beat plastic pollution and ensure rivers are free of plastic waste.

- The Poverty-Environment Action aims on deepening and broadening poverty-environment mainstreaming and aligning finance and investment with poverty, environment and climate objectives, in the face of the changing forms and conditions of poverty found in the world today. Its overall intended outcome is "Strengthened integration of poverty-environment objectives into policies, plans, regulations and investments of partner countries to accelerate delivery of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals."
- SEA Circular (Solving Plastic Solution at Source), UNEP Project is an initiative by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), which is funded by the Government of Sweden, to inspire market-based solutions and encourage enabling policies to solve marine plastic pollution at the source.
- UNEP and UN Women jointly initiated the Em Power project, with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency to give a platform for women and marginalized groups to use their voices, agency and leadership and collaborate with men to build climate resilience and secure sustainable development.
- The Asia Pacific Adaptation Network (APAN) is a regional programme for managing and applying adaptation knowledge in the region and supports governments and other organisations working on climate change adaptation. APAN aims to equip key actors in the region with adequate knowledge for designing and implementing climate change adaptation measures, building capacity to access technologies and finance in support of climate change adaptation, and integrating climate change adaptation into policies, strategies, and plans.
- City Adapt promotes climate resilience in urban areas through the implementation of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for adaptation. It also strengthens the technical capacities of municipalities and citizens to analyse the impacts and vulnerabilities to climate change and identify appropriate nature-based solutions. The project takes place in three cities in three Latin America and the Caribbean countries and five cities in four Asian countries.
- The joint UNDP-UNEP National Adaptation Plan Global Support Programme (NAP-GSP), funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), has assisted over 60 least developed and developing countries in identifying technical, institutional and financial needs to integrate climate change adaptation into medium and long-term national planning and financing. The programme has operationally closed in December 2021, but will continue to build on extension work and success of the NAP-GSP through the recently GEF approved project on "Strengthening Endogenous Capacities of Least Developed Countries to Access Finance for Climate Change Adaptation" that will be implemented by the UNEP and executed by START International, a global leading company.

- The Cool Coalition is a global multi-stakeholder network that connects a wide range of key actors from government, cities, international organizations, businesses, finance, academia, and civil society groups to facilitate knowledge exchange, advocacy and joint action towards a rapid global transition to efficient and climate-friendly cooling. The Cool Coalition is now working with over 100 partners, including 23 countries and promotes an ‘reduce-shift-improve-protect holistic and cross-sectoral approach to meet the cooling needs of both industrialized and developing countries through urban form, better building design, energy efficiency, renewables, and thermal storage as well as phasing down HFCs.
- Green Fins is a proven conservation management approach implemented internationally by ‘The Reef World Foundation’ and the ‘UN Environment Programme’ which leads to a measurable reduction in the negative environmental impacts associated with marine tourism. It aims to protect coral reefs through environmentally friendly guidelines promoting sustainable diving and snorkelling. It provides the only internationally recognised environmental standards for marine tourism and its robust assessment system measures compliance. (*UNESCAP* – www.unescap.org)

15. Discussion and Policy Conclusion

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) functions as a fundamental and key element of sustainable development by ensuring that environmental considerations are embedded and integrated into the developmental process. Policy making processes must be upgraded to better manage complexity, and address inter-linkage across sectors, strengthen spaces for multi-stakeholder participation, and applying new skills and methodologies, such as foresight, behavioural sciences and systems thinking.

Despite its conceptual strength, EIA often suffers from implementation gaps and governed by social and political considerations. Since the Asia Pacific regions are emerging and to a great extent fast-track economies having diverse and multifarious challenges, adopting EIA for achieving environment sustainability in the region are key challenges. However, despite the limitations, with adequate legal reforms, institutional autonomy and enhanced community involvement, EIA can evolve into a more effective tool for ecological governance in the Asia Pacific sub-region. As the world faces worsening climate change and biodiversity loss which seems to be perennial and persisting, a robust EIA framework offers a pathway to development that is not only economically viable but also ecologically responsible and impactful. Strengthening EIA is thus both an environmental necessity and a moral imperative in the region. This would go a long way in aligning EIA with the United Nations SDGs which in turn would entail in achieving the UN SDGs by 2030.

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