Press Release

Innovation Finance for Development: Catalysing Partnerships and Capital for Sustainable Impact in Asia and the Pacific

UNESCAP 82nd Commission Meeting | Bangkok, 21 April 2026

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The Innovation Finance for Development side event at the Eighty-second Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) convened senior policymakers, United Nations officials, international organizations, and mission-driven capital partners to explore how innovative financing can accelerate inclusive growth, climate resilience, biodiversity protection, and sustainable infrastructure across Asia and the Pacific.

Organized by the Ascent Partners Foundation in collaboration with the IOM Climate Mobility Innovation Lab, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and Mandala Capital, the event was made possible through the dedicated efforts of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) team, whose leadership and coordination ensured the side event's success.

Key Highlights from the Side Event

- Simon Mak (Ascent Partners Foundation) presented empirical research demonstrating a positive correlation between ESG education and ESG investment, with studies showing a 5-21% enhancement in investment outcomes. He underscored efforts to reduce barriers to ESG learning through the ESG Made Simple book series (available via Amazon at distribution cost) and free ESG reporting resources (https://www.ifrs.report). More information: www.ascent.partners

- Bradley Mellicker (IOM Climate Mobility Innovation Lab) introduced the IOM Climate Mobility Catalytic Fund, which provides 50-50 matching grants for climate mitigation and adaptation projects in frontline migration countries. He emphasized that public entities should complement-not compete with-private investment, focusing on domains where private capital is absent. More information: www.iom.int

- Lee Wei Hsien (IUCN) highlighted biodiversity financing as a driver of conservation and sustainable growth, pointing to nature-based solutions, ecosystem services, and conservation finance as critical enablers of resilience. More information: www.iucn.org

- Uday Garg (Mandala Capital) shared private investment perspectives, stressing that private capital brings discipline, scalability, and accountability. He outlined Mandala Capital's Pan-Asian footprint across Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, India, and the Philippines, and its focus on climate resilience, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, and inclusive infrastructure. He emphasized innovation finance mechanisms such as blended structures, catalytic capital, and thematic vehicles as scalable pathways to impact. More information: www.mandala-capital.com

Outcomes and Next Steps

The moderated panel discussion and interactive exchange reinforced the importance of cross-sector collaboration and policy dialogue to enable innovation finance. Participants identified opportunities for co-investment, blended finance structuring, and replication of successful models across Asia-Pacific markets. The event concluded with acknowledgments to Rupa Chanda, Jonathan Wong, and Ryan Carvalho of the UNESCAP ESBN team, whose contributions and coordination were instrumental in making the side event happen, and a collective call to move from dialogue to implementation.

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Further Information:

- Ascent Partners Foundation: www.ascent.partners
- IOM Climate Mobility Innovation Lab: www.iom.int
- IUCN: www.iucn.org
- Mandala Capital: www.mandala-capital.com
- UNESCAP 82nd Commission Session: indico.un.org/event/escap82