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**Opening Statement by H.E. Mr. Abulkalam Abdul Momen,
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ECOSOC AMR Regional Meeting for Asia and the Pacific
Kyoto, Japan
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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Konnichiwa — and welcome to the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review Regional Meeting for Asia and the Pacific. I regret my limited Japanese will not carry me much further. Therefore, may I speak in a language that is understood by many in this august gathering; it's not *Bangla*, my mother tongue but English, a UN language.

First, let me pose a question. If the 20th Century was the era of the Atlantic, will the 21st Century be that of the Asia Pacific?

Indeed, with so many new Tigers making waves, it is easy to lose sight of the original: our gracious host. After the devastation of the 1940s, Japan rose from the ashes of the War, emerging in short order as the world's second largest economy, and remained so until China took over the position in 2010.

Over the past decades, other Asian countries gradually emerged, led by the Japanese economic engine. First, attracted by more affordable labor forces, Japanese investments flowed into East Asian countries. As their labor markets matured with upgraded skills and increased productivity, investments expanded further into neighbouring countries with less expensive labor forces, thus creating job opportunities and stimulating their economies.

Governments' strategic policy choices in investing in physical and social infrastructure, as well as human and social capital, created multi-layers of skilled and productive human resources - the engine of Asian economic progress. The tangible human benefits of this are hundreds of millions of people lifted out of poverty in a remarkably short period.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, we meet here, after the successful conclusion of the International Labor Organization's 15th Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting -----to build on the outcomes of that meeting, and create a synergy in our efforts to advance the agenda. That is, to promote productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty for achieving Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including the MDGs.

We know that the Asia and Pacific region is one of the most diverse regions. It hosts countries with advanced and emerging economies, middle income developing countries, but also many Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDs).

Most LDCs and Pacific Island countries face considerable challenges in achieving the MDGs. All are confronted with economic vulnerability, stagnant economic growth, limited productive capacities, and weak employment opportunities. All are adversely affected by the effects of global warming and climate change. For Small Island Developing and climatically vulnerable States, the prospect of a continuing warming climate, together with narrowing economic, trade and employment options, mean that their very survival is at stake.

The Istanbul Programme of Action, adopted at the recent UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC IV) held in Turkey this year, highlighted the importance of, among others, establishing institutions to support research and development, science and technology, and enhancing productive capacities through allocating financial, technical and institutional assistance. I urge this meeting to issue a call to action for establishing the proposed LDC mechanism for science and technology. I understand that Bangladesh has offered to the Secretary General office facilities to establish a global UN Science, Technology and Innovation Centre (UNSTI) with a view to smoothen and facilitate technology transfer to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

In order to make tangible progress in achieving the MDGs by 2015, more targeted approaches are necessary to address the particular needs of vulnerable countries, regions and people, while also strengthening efforts to achieve sustained and job-rich economic growth.

To do this, the very diversity of the region can be turned into an asset. Asia and Pacific region can create an effective regional network on which knowledge and skill can be built on and shared. This will enable countries at different stages of development to learn from each other, sharing information, good practices and lessons learned, and transferring knowledge and technology for the upliftment of humanity. Region-wide cooperation can be achieved through North-South, South-South and Triangular cooperation, and by developing a common monitoring framework.

Let me briefly touch upon the role of the Economic and Social Council. The Council has been the UN System's Development *Sherpa*, duly monitoring the implementation of the commitments made at the major international conferences and summits, and coordinating the UN system-wide follow-up.

The 2005 World Summit mandated ECOSOC to hold annual ministerial-level substantive reviews (popularly known as AMRs) to assess progress, drawing on its functional and regional commissions and other international institutions. Since its inception in 2007, the AMR process has focused on poverty reduction in 2007, sustainable development in 2008, global health in 2009, gender in 2010 and education in 2011.

In 2012, the AMR will address employment and decent work as a foundation for strengthening productive capacity, reducing poverty, and achieving economic growth and sustainable development. Eleven countries¹ have volunteered to make National Voluntary Presentations (NVPs) in 2012, with the participation of Ministerial-level government

¹ Algeria, Brazil, Ecuador, Kenya, Mauritius, Mexico, Peru, Qatar, Russia, Senegal and Ukraine

representatives, UN entities, and representatives of civil society, the private sector and academia. Let me share some information with you all. This year ECOSOC and the Second Committee jointly organized a Special event on Job-rich growth with a view to understand large scale youth unemployment and to identify means to provide jobs to all.

In many of our deliberations, especially the leaders of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS identified that productive capacity is one of the main hindrance to their growth and prosperity. Therefore, the main outcome of the 2012 AMR will be a Ministerial Declaration on its theme, “Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work”. Our discussions today will feed into the outcome document, as well as the report of the Secretary-General analyzing progress on the theme.

With the Rio+20 Conference around the corner, and preparations for a post-2015 framework in progress, the Council is leveraging its position as a broad-based and inclusive forum to shape their conceptual underpinning and outcomes. I believe that the AMR process is one of the important paths towards building a broad-based consensus towards a post-2015 development agenda.

Our attention at next year’s ECOSOC will also focus on the Development Cooperation Forum (also popularly known as DCF) which convenes every two years. I expect that these discussions will set the tone for scaling up the Council’s role in monitoring aid effectiveness, within its mandate, for promoting and enhancing development cooperation.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Through promoting more sustained, inclusive, equitable growth for the entire region, we can build a stable, prosperous and harmonious Asia and Pacific region, where everyone benefits from development gains, has access to basic social services and decent work, and is able to lead a long, healthy and productive life. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has submitted a model and her vision of peace and growth known as ‘Peoples Empowerment’. She believes that if we can empower people with skill, education and job, and guarantee them right to participate in governance, end poverty and hunger, eliminate discrimination, include the excluded groups or people, and end all forms of terrorism, such will lead to sustainable peace, prosperity and growth for all. The centrality of all our development efforts, my dear colleagues and friends, is human being and therefore, let us work together for the wellbeing of humanity. May I conclude by reciting a Bengali poem written by national Poet of Bangladesh Kazi Nazrul Islam and he writes,

“Gahi Shammer Gaan

Manusher Cheye Boro kichu nai, nohe kichu mohiyon

Nai Desh Kal Pather Ved, Aved Dhormo Jathi

Jekane Mishechey Hindu-Buddha-Muslim-Christian

Gahi Shammer Gaan” and another one,

“ Shobar Uporey Manush Shatho, Thaher Uprey Nai”

(I sing the song for human equality, no one is bigger or more glorified to human beings, no reason to discriminate owing to place, time, or religion, between Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians, and second, human being is above all, they are real)

I thank you.