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**“From risk to resilience: Accelerating actions to achieve a more sustainable and equitable future through regional cooperation”**

**Dialogue of the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions  
with the Second Committee of the General Assembly**

**Tuesday, 25 October 2022  
21:00-00:00 hrs. (Bangkok)-10:00-13:00 hrs. (New York)**

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**Distinguished Chair, Excellency Ms. Lachezara Stoeva, Ambassador  
and Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN,**

**Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,**

I would like to present key trends in Asia and the Pacific and highlighting our support to countries towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Allow me to first provide **snapshots of key regional trends:**

- **Cascading and converging risks from disease, disasters and climate change** have increased poverty and widened inequalities.
- **Climate change continues to escalate rapidly.** As **risks from disasters outpace resilience**, we are at a tipping point, especially in the small island developing States.
- Countries are now grappling with the **knock-on effects of the Ukraine crisis**, as rising inflation leads to a cost of living crisis.

The convergence of these crises is the reality behind the lack of progress towards the attainment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region.

## **Excellencies,**

**Regional commissions**, through their intergovernmental forums, research and analysis as well as technical assistance, **are well-placed to support countries in navigating these crises** and **strengthening their resilience** to future risks.

Let me to highlight four key area:

### **(i) First, to enhance preparedness for future crises,**

- **We are assisting countries, including Cambodia, the Maldives and Mongolia, develop comprehensive and universal social protection**, in line with the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation in Social Protection, as the first line of defense. At this point in time, over half of the population in Asia and the Pacific has yet to covered by any social protection scheme.
- The recently adopted Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023-2032, provides us with concrete entry points to enhance disability-inclusive development, including by building the resilience of persons with disabilities against risks.

- **Through development of holistic risk reduction systems** such as the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action for Adaptation to Drought, we are helping countries adapt and develop response strategies to counter emerging risks.

**(ii) Second, to accelerate the decarbonization of the economy,**

- **We are helping countries fast-track and sustain inclusive energy transition through** development of national **SDG7 Road Maps**, which have already been completed in **11 countries** as well as **three cities** in Indonesia and Thailand, with more in the pipeline.<sup>1</sup>
- **To support countries in recasting ambitious climate actions**, we have scaled-up support, including through the Regional Collaborative Platform, to revise Nationally Determined Contributions, develop strategies for smart mobility in Southeast Asia, and foster a regional modality to collectively tackle air pollution.

**(iii) Third, we aim to strengthen connectivity in transport, trade, energy and information and communication technology for sustainable development.**

- **We are helping countries realize the potential of resilient and climate-smart trade and investment** through the **Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade**. The new **Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business** by the ESCAP

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<sup>1</sup> Bhutan, Fiji, Georgia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, and Tonga

Sustainable Business Network likewise signals the momentum of change in the business sector.

- To **bridge the digital divide, both across as well as within countries**, the **Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway** promotes subregional Internet Exchange points to yield digital dividends.
- Through the adoption of the new **Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development** and development of roadmaps for port development in Indonesia, Maldives, and Viet Nam, we are supporting the move towards sustainable and resilient transport.

**(iv) Lastly, to align public and private finance with sustainable development and the Paris Agreement.**

- Our **macro-economic modelling tool** has supported policymakers in Indonesia and Mongolia in simulating the socioeconomic and environmental effects of different national economic policy scenarios on **public debt sustainability**.
- **In addition, we have helped countries develop innovative financing.** In the Pacific, we are developing debt-for-climate swaps with the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat while in Cambodia, we are working with national stakeholders on the issuance of SDG bonds.
- Together with the other regional commissions, UN Climate Change Champions and the Egyptian Presidency of COP-27, we

are also **showcasing to financiers a pipeline of projects that are Paris-aligned and** will continue this work so that private investors are aware of such investment opportunities in Asia and the Pacific.

## **Excellencies,**

The seventy-eighth session of the Commission deliberated on **a common agenda** to advance sustainable development through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific.

Member States in the region have provided us with a blueprint centering around **protecting people and the planet, leveraging digital opportunities, trading and investing** more together, aligning **financial resources** with the SDGs and **managing debt**.

The priorities I have enumerated above lies at the core of the Bangkok Declaration.<sup>2</sup> And going forward, our work will be implemented within the framework of Our Common Agenda.

As **crises increasingly transcend borders**, no country can deal with these crises alone. There is no alternative to effective and inclusive **multilateralism**, including at **regional and subregional levels**, with the SDGs at its core.

Please count on ESCAP as your trusted partner as we prepare for our future.

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<sup>2</sup> 78/1. Bangkok Declaration Commemorating the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: a Common Agenda to Advance Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

## ANNEX

- The pandemic and climate crisis have brought an urgent need to focus much **stronger cooperation with regional and subregional organizations** on a wider range of regional public goods.
- ESCAP has been continuously strengthening cooperation, holding to the principles of networked and inclusive multilateralism. Please allow me to highlight a few selected initiatives over the past year.
- In the **Pacific**, ESCAP has strengthened its collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the Pacific Community (SPC) and other Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies on a few Pacific priorities, including National Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Tracker. Recently, to explore options for debt relief or debt restructuring, ESCAP and PIFS co-hosted the Pacific Regional Debt Conference in April 2022.
- In **East and North-East Asia**, ESCAP has partnered with the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) to focus on climate action by holding a Carbon Neutrality Forum in November 2021. ESCAP also has built an effective partnership with the Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI) to promote connectivity and sustainable development in North-East Asia, strengthening cross-sectoral coordination on trade, transport and energy.
- In **North and Central Asia**, ESCAP collaborates with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Vienna Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries. ESCAP recently participated in the SCO Summit in Samarkand. Jointly with UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), ESCAP also supports the UN Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA),

focusing on pandemic recovery strategies, transport and trade harmonization, and science and technology and innovations.

- In **South and South-West Asia**, ESCAP works closely with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) to strengthen their contributions and role in the South Asia Forum for Sustainable Development for shaping the subregional perspective.
- In **South-East Asia**, cooperation is strong and dynamic with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-2025 provides a solid foundation to scale up collaboration and respond to the socio-cultural opportunities and challenges of ASEAN. The Plan of Action identifies an actionable framework to develop joint programmes and activities in the areas of social protection, connectivity in trade, transport and energy, as well as the environment and climate action, including disaster risk reduction.