

**Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana**  
**Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations**  
**and Executive Secretary of ESCAP**

**Remarks (check against delivery)**

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**Excellencies, distinguished delegates,**

The future belongs to our next generation. The future they inherit, however, depends on the choices we now make.

With two-thirds of the world's population living in Asia and the Pacific, the decisions taken in the region will largely determine our collective future.

The region accounts for nearly half of the world's economic activity, owing to its large, young, healthy and educated labour force; availability of capital; and widespread introduction of technology.

Millions have been lifted out of poverty. Out of our 53 members, only one remains low-income. Out of the original fourteen least developed countries, only five will remain by the decade's end.

Despite the various divides and uneven progress towards sustainable development, its trajectory has undeniably been a success.

A future with even greater possibilities, however, calls for a transformative change to this model of development.

Given its significant economic size, the region must reduce its carbon emissions through every means possible.

With the median age expected to reach 40.5 by 2050, those above 65 will account for a fifth of the total population by 2050.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 22.3 years in 1990 and 32.7 years in 2024

Without further expansion of labour force, we must now fully draw upon the resources that we already have, including women, seniors with the interest in remaining in the work force and persons with disabilities.

With the anticipated drawing down of savings and pensions by retirees and increased demand for social safety nets, an equitable social security system must be established while we are still benefiting from the demographic dividend.

Addressing financing gaps as well as debt servicing and mobilization of private sector investment now will be critical.

Given the declines in labour force as well as domestic savings, improvement in the quality of life will increasingly depend on the harnessing of technology.

Equitable access to new technology, including artificial intelligence, will shape our collective future. Robust governance and universal connectivity are prerequisites to this inclusive technological transformation.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Our future depends on the potential that we invest in our youth. They must see possibilities, participate in decision-making and seize opportunities before them.

As the regional commission for Asia and the Pacific, we identify emerging issues and propose solutions, among others, on energy transition pathways, sustainable financing and inclusive businesses.

We must pass on a future with even greater possibilities to the next generation.

Thank you.