Speech by Assistant Foreign Minister ZHANG Jun
at the General Debate of the 74th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

15 May 2018

Mr./Mme. Chair,
Mme. Executive Secretary,
Ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Chinese government, let me begin by extending my congratulations on the opening of the 74th session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). I would also like to thank the government of Thailand and the Secretariat of the Commission for your thoughtful arrangements. Today’s session, with its focus on inequality in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is highly relevant.

The global economy is now moving in a positive direction, and major economies are growing in sync. On the other hand, problems like unbalanced development, equality deficit, rising anti-globalization sentiments and protectionism pose severe challenges to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. While the Asia-Pacific economies enjoy enormous potential and a sound momentum of growth, they also face difficulties in shifting toward new drivers of growth, increasing fragmentation of regional cooperation, and other challenges.

As the most important UN body for regional economic and social development, ESCAP has been committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda, and advancing cooperation in such areas as regional economic integration, connectivity, and capacity building for economic and social development, thus making important contributions to the development and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific. Facing the new circumstances and new challenges, we hope the Commission will stay true to its mission and strive for further progress, creating new opportunities and contributing more significantly to regional and global development.

First, we need to foster strong drivers of growth through innovation. In the new round of scientific and technological revolution, economic growth mainly relies on improving total factor productivity and creating new drivers. As President Xi Jinping emphasized on multiple occasions, we need to make innovation the primary driving force behind development. ESCAP should leverage its advantage as a policy platform and think tank, follow the major trend of the new scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, and encourage its members to embrace innovation-driven development, accelerating the upgrading of industrial structures, thus injecting inexhaustible impetus into our economies.

Second, we need to promote regional integration through opening-up. Opening-
up brings dynamism to the Asia-Pacific economy. It is also an important pathway to poverty reduction and sustainable development. ESCAP is committed to pursuing development through opening-up, as evidenced by the release of the Bangkok Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific and the conclusion of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. These efforts have put the formation of an integrated Asia-Pacific market on a faster track.

History tells us repeatedly that those who exercise unilateralism and protectionism hurt others without protecting themselves. The differences and disputes in global trade must be resolved by playing by the rules and engaging in consultations for win-win outcomes. We need to firmly uphold the multilateral trading regime and oppose protectionism. By doing so, we will create a more integrated economy in our region and make economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all. We need to promote macro-economic policy coordination, enhance positive interconnection, and reduce negative spillovers.

**Third, we need to pursue interconnected development through connectivity.** ESCAP puts connectivity on the top of its cooperation agenda, and has made important plans for such cooperation. For instance, it has concluded three inter-governmental agreements, concerning the Trans-Asian Railway, the Asian Highway Network and the Asia-Pacific Dry Ports respectively, adopted multiple resolutions on connectivity, and was the first UN agency to adopt a Belt and Road-related resolution. Going forward, we need to turn words into actions, and better coordinate ESCAP endeavors with the Belt and Road Initiative. We should work to implement projects in key areas, including transportation, telecommunications, energy, trade, finance and the Internet, and establish a comprehensive and efficient network of connectivity to advance interconnected regional development.

**Fourth, we need to promote inclusive and sustainable development through joint contribution and sharing of benefits.** As a blueprint for global development, the 2030 Agenda is of great significance for all countries, particularly the developing countries, in their efforts to achieve development, narrow development gap and address inequalities. ESCAP is the first UN agency to formulate a roadmap for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Guided by the roadmap, we should focus on the primary task of development, help developing members improve capacity, and eliminate poverty and inequalities, thus jointly contributing to a future where everyone is free from want and enjoys development and dignity.

Dear colleagues,

China attaches great importance to ESCAP. Under the leadership of Executive Secretary Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, ESCAP has made remarkable achievements in upholding multilateralism, promoting regional integration and connectivity, and implementing the 2030 Agenda. China will continue to support ESCAP’s greater role in promoting sustainable development, including to support cooperation programs concerning agriculture, poverty reduction, disaster relief, women, and cross-border transportation, etc, through the China-ESCAP Cooperation Fund.
As part of the UN efforts to reform its development system, the reform of ESCAP is progressing steadily. China expects to see a development-oriented reform that substantively boosts execution and operational efficiency and pays more attention to and addresses the demands and concerns of developing countries. If so, the reform can provide new opportunities for implementing the 2030 Agenda and fostering inclusive and sustainable development.

Dear colleagues,

China's development has entered a new era. China resolutely deepens reform and enhances high-quality development to unlock market vitality and social creativity. China's economy grew by 6.8% in the first quarter this year, injecting strong impetus into the growth of the Asia-Pacific and making important contribution to global economy. China opens wider and creates a more enabling business environment by taking new measures, to share the benefits of its development with other countries. We vigorously push forward Belt and Road cooperation and fosters greater synergy between development initiatives to build a broad platform for regional cooperation. We also pursue a people-centered approach, redouble our efforts to improve people's lives, and advance targeted poverty alleviation to ensure that by the year 2020, all the rural residents below the current poverty line will have been out of poverty, so as to ensure that everyone could benefit from the development.

China is a contributor to and an advocate and participant of global development. We will continue to take an active part in reforming and improving the global governance system, and support and protect the right to development enjoyed by developing countries. China is committed to advancing South-South cooperation and providing assistance to other developing countries as its ability permits. We will make full use of the two-billion-dollar Assistance Fund for South-South Cooperation and the one-billion-dollar China-UN Peace and Development Fund set up by China and leverage the role of the Center for International Knowledge on Development and the Academy of South-South Cooperation and Development. These efforts will boost developing countries' capacity for self-generated development and provide strong support for joint implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

With ESCAP as a platform, China stands ready to work with all parties to build an Asia-Pacific partnership based on mutual trust, inclusiveness, cooperation and win-win progress. With confidence and greater commitment to cooperation, we will make new contributions to the common development and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific and the well-being of billions of people in this region.

Thank you.