Statement by Mr. Kazuyuki NAKANE,
State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan,
at the 74th Session of the United Nations
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
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Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

(Introduction)
Let me begin by congratulating everyone on the convening of the 74th session of the UNESCAP Commission. I happily recall my memories of attending the 71st session as head of the Japanese delegation in the capacity of Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. Today I am truly delighted to return and speak here, this time as the State Minister for Foreign Affairs.

(SDGs and Japan's efforts)
In this session, we have gathered here to discuss ways to implement effectively “the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” with the main theme of reducing “inequality”.

“Reduce inequality within and among countries”, is Goal 10 of the SDGs. I believe it crucial that we make vigorous efforts to reduce inequality and realize inclusive economic growth, if we are to achieve all of the 17 SDGs with the central concept of “no one left behind”.

In the ESCAP region, despite the remarkable economic growth that the region has enjoyed to date, we are facing serious challenges threatening our growth arising from the socio-economic gaps within and among the member states of the region. That is, inequality, in a word, is standing in our way
of sharing the fruits of growth with each and every individual in society. Our most important agenda, therefore, is to address these inequalities standing in our way and make sure the fruits of our growth are enjoyed widely in the region with no one being excluded.

From this point of view, I think it very timely that this session is focusing on Multilateralism and Frontier Technologies as the key tools in reducing "inequality". In this connection, I would like to introduce some examples of Japan's efforts in these areas.

(Efforts in multilateralism)
Firstly, with respect to multilateralism, Japan is promoting the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" as our overarching policy in the region. Geographically, Southeast Asia serves as the important nodal point connecting the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. Japan aims to promote peace and prosperity in the whole ESCAP region by pursuing this strategy.

Secondly, I would like to shed light upon examples of our inequality reduction efforts from the fiscal aspect. In order to reduce inequality through fiscal policies, approaches from both revenue and expenditure sides are necessary. An appropriate tax system and its implementation are crucial in improving the revenue side. And, on the expenditure side, policies such as a progressive taxation system have a major impact on tackling inequalities in society.

From these viewpoints, Japan is providing technical assistance for building the taxation capacity of developing countries. To this end, we are also contributing financially to the framework called "Platform for Collaboration on Tax" and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Furthermore, Japan also contributes in the human resource field, in the proper
implementation of tax systems, for example, through dispatching JICA long-term experts to five countries in the Asia Pacific Region, and by providing training courses to officials from overseas in Japan. We will continue to actively support tax capacity building of developing countries.

(Conclusion)

Finally, I would like to refer to our efforts in the field of frontier technologies. Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) are definitely important means to achieve SDGs. The United Nations Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum) is held every year since 2016 in NY. Japan is taking an active role in leading discussions in this setting and at the third session of the forum, expected to convene on the 5th and 6th of next month, Japan will serve as the co-chair along with Mexico.

Moreover, Japan is determined to contribute to the realization of SDGs by actively applying its frontier technologies and scientific knowledge globally.

To end my remarks, it is my strong hope that we utilize the various important platforms provided by ESCAP on our path to inequality reduction and inclusive growth in the region so that no one is left behind.

Thank you for your kind attention.