Thank you Mr President.

It is an honour to represent Australia at this Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) High-level Intergovernmental meeting. Australia commends the Working Group for its continued efforts to promote the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022, and the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

Mr President

This meeting presents a unique opportunity for member States to discuss and examine their pursuit of targets and principles described in a range of international frameworks including the Incheon Strategy, the Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr President

Australia’s commitment to actualising these frameworks and promoting the rights of people with disabilities reflects who we are as a Nation. Australia works collaboratively with other Nation States to strengthen and improve our regional and collective efforts – promoting more equal and inclusive societies. We recognise that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development cannot be actualised if we leave people behind. That is why Australia supported the recognition and inclusion of people with disabilities in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr President

The Australian Government has recently released its 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, which details Australia’s commitment to a prosperous and stable region. That is why we focus on poverty reduction and promoting the participation in the economy and society of the most disadvantaged, including women and girls, and people with disability.

Demonstrating our commitment to article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on international cooperation, we explicitly include people with disabilities as participants in and beneficiaries of our aid program. Our Development for All 2015-2020 strategy takes a human rights approach and commits Australia’s international advocacy, diplomatic efforts and our aid program investments to improving the lives of people with disabilities in developing countries.

Our Development for All 2015-2020 strategy provides an Australian interpretation of the range of international frameworks – Australia’s direct support to the region and countries for activities related to specific 2030 Agenda goals include:

- Providing funding to Indonesia’s SDG Secretariat to assist with Indonesia’s implementation of the 2030 Agenda ($312,000 per year for three years).
- SDG 3: Supporting disability-inclusive health services, rehabilitation service strengthening and community-based rehabilitation to be strengthened in the Western Pacific region through our support of WHO
• SDG 4: In Laos, supporting the Lao PDR’s education efforts to increase education participation and helping improve the quality of education and the learning environment in 66 of the country’s most disadvantaged districts.

• SDG 4: Our support to UNICEF in the Pacific, PNG and Vietnam to strengthen the protection and inclusion in education of children with disabilities.

• SDG 5: In Indonesia, establishing local women’s groups to help local women in a range of ways such as supporting access to social protection programs providing leadership on maternal and reproductive health, and removing workplace discrimination.

Australia will present its own first Voluntary National Review on the 2030 Agenda in 2018.

Mr President

On the international stage, Australia is also proud to serve as the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network co-chair alongside the International Disability Alliance. GLAD provides a platform for organisations to share knowledge and resources, amplify our united voice for maximum influence, and increase coordination of our disability-inclusive contributions in development and humanitarian settings.

Mr President,

Australia remains firmly committed to pursuing the goals and targets articulated in the Incheon Strategy, the Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.