Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

- In 1957, the International Atomic Energy Agency was created with a vision to harness the power of the atom for the benefit of humankind. Widely known as the world’s “Atoms for Peace and Development” organization within the United Nations family, the IAEA — within its statute and mandate — works with its Member States and partners across the globe to help countries use nuclear science and technology to meet their development challenges.

- The IAEA works with its Member States to develop specialized expertise, networks, infrastructure and capacity that can be used in complementarity with conventional techniques where nuclear science and technology has an added value. Through its Technical Cooperation programme, the IAEA assists its Member States to address many of the key challenges facing us today: climate change, food and energy security, pollution of the oceans and seas, and human health.

Nuclear science and technology remain highly relevant in the efforts to attain sustainable development goals, and even in emergency response for pandemics such COVID-19.

- In response to the growing number of requests for assistance in the rapid detection of COVID-19, the Agency procured and delivered to Member States diagnostic kits that use nuclear derived techniques (real-time reverse transcription–polymerase chain reaction, or real-time RT–PCR). Through a technical cooperation project, the largest in the Agency's history, in terms of both the number of beneficiary countries and the disbursement of resources, the IAEA successfully delivered equipment and consumables to support testing for COVID-19 to 128 countries and territories, 27 of which in the Asia and the Pacific Region.
Support included informative sessions through webinar series, training, Q/A in COVID-19 testing laboratories, and ensuring continued supply of alternative reagents. Based on the feedback of a survey, it is estimated that more than 28 million people were tested.

- Stemming from the IAEA’s longstanding experience in supporting Member States in zoonotic disease outbreaks and to be better prepared for outbreaks in the future, the IAEA Director General, Mr Rafael Grossi, launched the Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action (ZODIAC) project—an initiative to enhance global response preparedness against possible future outbreaks of zoonotic diseases.

- ZODIAC includes a new interregional technical cooperation project on ‘Supporting National and Regional Capacity in Integrated Action for Control of Zoonotic Diseases’, which will build global, regional and national capabilities for the surveillance, detection and control of emerging or re-emerging zoonotic diseases.

- Plastic pollution is another global challenge the world is facing, threatening ecosystems, imperilling food safety, and affecting human health. The IAEA contributes to address plastic pollution using nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques on two fronts: plastic recycling and marine monitoring of microplastic. Tackling the plastic pollution challenge requires bringing together new and existing efforts to achieve progress at a larger scale. A Roundtable for the Asia and the Pacific Region on “Nuclear Techniques to Address Plastic Pollution (NUTEC) - Atoms Contributing to the Search for Solutions to Plastic Pollution” will be held on May 18, 2021, to highlight the IAEA research and technical cooperation projects in plastic recycling using radiation technology; and marine monitoring of microplastics using isotopic tracing techniques.

- Several countries in Asia and the Pacific already have advanced capabilities and initiatives that can offer nuclear solutions to plastic pollution. With the cooperation of UNEP, ESCAP and ASEAN, the roundtable shall provide a platform for presentation and discussion of new solutions to plastic pollution, with a particular focus on the unique contributions of nuclear technologies; and promote collaborative partnerships for an integrated, coordinated and solution-oriented approach in the fight against plastic pollution.

- It is important to engage, collaborate and synergize. South-South Cooperation, Triangular Cooperation and Regional Collaboration have effectively supported the development efforts of the IAEA Member States. The IAEA, through its mandate, stand ready to collaborate with ESCAP to extend our cooperation on mutually shared important topics.

- We look forward to comprehensive and converging actions to address current and emerging challenges.