Country Statement by H.E. Mr. Choi Jong-moon
Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea
on the Occasion of the 77th UN ESCAP Commission
April 27, 2021

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking Her Excellency Armida Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary as well as all the UNESCAP staff for organizing this event.

Madam Chair,

The corona virus has indeed transformed many aspects of our daily lives across the world. And the Asia-Pacific region is no exception. We all struggle to build back better and step forward to meet the post-COVID-19-era. I would like to take this opportunity to present three points which will help bolster the sense of solidarity and cooperation across the region.

First, we should expand and deepen cooperation for the digital transformation in the Asia-Pacific region. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated a shift to a non face-to-face interaction. The Republic of Korea, as a digital powerhouse, adopted the “Digital New Deal” policy.
On the same note, Korea is expanding its ODA in the digital area to contribute to strengthening innovation capabilities in the region. For instance, the smart transport system project using digital technology has been brought by the Korea-ESCAP Fund.

Second, we need to promote a sustainable green recovery and expand cooperation to respond to climate change. The Republic of Korea will host the 2021 P4G Seoul Summit in May. This Summit will muster the international community’s commitment to carbon neutrality and market-based partnerships to build a sustainable future. I look forward to the active participation from Asia-Pacific countries.

Third, we should strengthen our cooperation to protect our vast regional marine environment. Environment is one of the 8 work programs in UNESCAP and many ESCAP members share the valuable ocean ecosystem of the Pacific. In this light, I am very concerned that the recent decision by the Japanese government to discharge the contaminated water into the ocean can have a serious adverse impact on human health and environment in the region.

The United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea says that countries should take all measures to ensure activities under
their jurisdiction are carried out not to cause damage by pollution. Also, they should cooperate to exchange information about pollution.

That is why the Korean government has requested Japan to ensure that its measures should be in line with global standards by providing sufficient scientific grounds and sharing information, having enough consultations with stakeholders in advance to ensure transparency, and guaranteeing Korea and other stakeholders’ participation in the IAEA’s safety verification process.

Madam Chair,

In the middle of the pandemic, the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has become an even more challenging task. The leadership demonstrated by ESCAP is vital. Korea will continue to cooperate with other member states so that together we can build back better and inclusive Asia-Pacific region. Thank you. /END/