Mr. Chairman,
Madam Executive Secretary,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. It is my pleasure and honour to once again deliver the opening remarks at the annual session of the Commission.

2. It has been over a year since the global community has had to face up to COVID-19. This common threat to humanity has tested national and global cooperation at all levels, challenging us to build back stronger and better, ready to meet future crises.

3. COVID-19 has brought home the realization that building back better requires immediate action and a whole-of-society approach that places people at the centre of our efforts in all aspects, while ensuring no one is left behind. Our response encompasses different dimensions, namely;

   First, on public health, strengthening immunization and promoting equitable access to vaccines and health services will lessen the severity of illnesses and save lives. At the same time, promoting universal health coverage is essential to building resilient health systems that can more effectively respond to disasters and crises. In this regard, Thailand attaches high importance to the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework, including through the integration of the Bangkok Principles.

   Second, investing and reinforcing social protection systems can reduce inequalities and build people’s capacities to respond to crises, thereby ensuring their well-being.

   And, Third, we must shift our approach on economic development to one that prioritizes balanced, sustainable and environmentally-friendly growth. We should also promote the digital economy and economic connectivity in a manner that suit our respective national contexts.

4. Distinguished Delegates. Besides building back better, due consideration must be given to pursuing economic prosperity that is not at the expense of the environment. We must pursue a prosperity that ensures balanced co-habitation of humans, nature and the environment in all dimensions.

5. With this resolve, addressing climate change and moving towards a low-carbon society is high on Thailand’s agenda. We are determined to raise the bar on the efforts of all domestic sectors and stakeholders and at all fronts. Moreover, as a developing country and
one of the countries most affected by the long-term impacts of climate change, our emphasis will be on climate adaptation efforts and on building our country’s resilience to the increasing frequency and severity of disasters.

6. At the same time, Thailand is pursuing a development path to achieve sustainable development through the BCG Economy Model. Leveraging the concepts of bio-economy, circular economy and green economy, this new model will focus on harnessing our resources in the areas that are our country’s strengths to their full potential, such as on biological diversity. Utilizing science, technology and innovation as tools for value-creation, the BCG Economy Model will transform Thailand’s economy from one that “produces a lot but generates little income” to one that “produces less but generates more income”, in line with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) to help steer Thailand towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

7. I am confident that if we all can change our course of relations from “competition or confrontation” to “constructive collaboration” that is anchored on partnership, particularly by increasing each other’s capacity through investing in resources, sharing of knowledge and transfer of technology, and empowering human capital, we can collectively and constructively rise from this crisis stronger than we were before. Through such common endeavours, we can then ensure a development that is well-balanced, flexible and sustainable.

8. Furthermore, our response to this crisis and our recovery efforts must be carried out without discrimination, so that the fabric of our societies is strengthened, ensuring that no one is left behind as we pace forward. I take this opportunity to call upon all of us to oppose discrimination, prejudice, hatred and violence in all forms on the basis of race, gender, religion or political belief. To forge lasting peace, let us begin by understanding and embracing each other’s differences.

9. At this juncture, I wish to commend and reiterate Thailand’s readiness to support the works of ESCAP in bridging regional cooperation and forging partnerships as well as exchanges of experience and best practices, especially on locally-driven development approaches, among countries in the region. We recognize and appreciate ESCAP’s efforts in mobilizing resources for regional development, and providing Member States with technical assistance, especially on disaster risk reduction and management, and on science, innovation and technology to narrow the digital divide among countries and prepare us for the new digital era.

10. On the auspicious occasion of the 75th anniversary of Thailand’s membership in the United Nations this year and the 75th anniversary of the establishment of ESCAP next year, Thailand as ESCAP’s host country pledges to work closely in partnership with all countries in the region to actively support ESCAP’s work for the betterment of our region. Together, we will navigate our region towards a stronger and better path – one that is balanced, cares for our planet and leaves no one behind. It is our collective duty that we must pass on a better world for our future generations.

Thank you.