UK Statement at Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Thank you Chair, your excellencies, distinguished colleagues,

Let me begin by thanking UN ESCAP for their work in organising this Forum and to the Royal Thai Government for hosting. It is a pleasure to be here.

As home to 60 per cent of the world’s population, what happens in Asia and the Pacific matters globally. Given the challenges we face know no boundaries it is critical that we work together to achieve the SDGs. Following the unanimous recommitment to Agenda 2030 and the SDGs at the SDG Summit, there is an opportunity to reinvigorate a sense of collective purpose and partnership to support delivery of the Goals.

The UK’s ‘International development in a contested world’ White Paper sets out how we will reinvigorate progress on the SDGs, and work with partners to address the interlinked challenges of poverty, climate change and biodiversity loss.

We applaud the Secretary-General’s vision to use Our Common Agenda as the vehicle to bring coherence to both the future of multilateralism, and achieving the SDGs. We want to ensure that the Summit is a conduit for pushing forward tangible UN reform, in line with our objectives for a reinvigorated and dynamic UN that meets both the challenges and needs of today and is ready for those of tomorrow.

I would like to use this opportunity to make two points on the Pact for the Future.

First, we would like to thank the co-facilitators for developing a concise zero draft of the Pact for the Future, and attempting to find balance between the many views expressed by Member States. The UK sees this zero draft as a good foundation, but in our view, there are missed opportunities to ensure an impactful and action-oriented Summit.

In particular, we would like to see stronger language on gender, and human-rights throughout. We also want to agree bold new commitments to support the acceleration of SDG delivery, for example, through taking evidence-based action, focussing on investments and interventions that leverage the synergies between THE Goals whilst mitigating trade-offs, and targeting funding and partnerships towards the countries who are most vulnerable or furthest behind. With that in mind, we are glad to see extra efforts to engage SIDS and Pacific states in this regional forum.

This takes me to my second point, on ambition and action. The scope of the Pact is very broad, actions are buried in the detail, and it’s difficult to determine what will be different, once the Pact is agreed. We would like the Pact to set out more clearly what the issue is we are trying to solve and the actions we can take to solve it – focusing on a few dial-shifting ideas issues that will create genuine impact. We look forward to hearing more inputs from the many stakeholders present this week.

You have the UK’s full support in aiming for ambitious outcomes and strong Member State commitments to chart the course for a stronger multilateral system that is better equipped to meet the challenges of today and prepare for those of tomorrow.

We look forward to working with governments, civil society, academia, businesses, and others to champion and accelerate progress across the SDGs in this region and globally in 2024 and beyond.

Thank you.