

Speech for 79th Session of ESCAP Commission (max. 3 min)

by **H.E. Mr. Remco van Wijngaarden**,

Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Kingdom of Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

Your Excellencies,

It's a pleasure and an honor to join you today at the 79th Session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

For the Netherlands, the importance of cooperation with the Indo-Pacific countries is self-evident, be it in the fields of trade and economic cooperation, global stability and security, social development, or climate change. We can only overcome these global challenges by working together. And for international cooperation, we need – and luckily we have – a good set of international rules. Therefore, the Netherlands is very much committed to protecting the rules-based international order. It is the main pillar of our national Indo-Pacific strategy, which also focuses on contributing to sustainable economic growth, economic and social equality, and security.

The Netherlands has been an active participant in the efforts to develop a more coherent and engaged European approach to the Indo-Pacific. We are ready to step up and strengthen the international multilateral system, de-escalate tensions and promote a stable open and free Indo-Pacific region. And of course, this goes both ways, as developments in the Indo-Pacific are of direct relevance to Europe and vice versa.

I would like to touch on the central theme of today: “Accelerating climate action in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable development.” Climate change is an existential threat for the world in general, and some island states and large-mega cities along the coast in particular – including Bangkok. Climate change is threatening lives and livelihoods in every part of the world. Risks associated with climate-related disasters are a reality for millions of people around the globe. Food and water scarcity are linked to large-scale migrations and conflict. Heat and humidity may ultimately render large parts of the Indo-Pacific region unlivable. It's an illusion to expect that everything will remain the same if we do nothing. Quite the opposite, the cost of inaction will keep rising both in economic terms and in human lives. Air pollution, particularly the fine-dust pollution PM2.5, is very harmful and worrisome. According to a respiratory expert at Chiang Mai University, PM2.5 is already killing up to 40,000 Thai every year. WHO reported that “The combined effects of ambient air pollution and household air pollution are associated with 6.7 million premature deaths annually.”

The Netherlands and like-minded EU member states are working hard to raise the EU climate ambition to at least 55% emission reduction in 2030. The Netherlands has set the ambition to be a 100% circular economy by 2050 with its first and crucial step to reduce the use of raw materials

with 50 % by 2030. The Netherlands hosts the headquarter of the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA), an international organization engaged in adaptation solutions for a climate-resilient future, in the largest floating office in the world in Rotterdam. It also has regional offices in the Asia-Pacific – in China and Bangladesh – and is a good example of how we can tackle the consequences of climate change by sharing knowledge and working together on innovative and often nature-based solutions. With a third of our country lying below sea-level, we know what it takes to keep our feet dry. In this context, I should mention that the Dutch government finances smart and sustainable solutions for climate challenges worldwide via the Dutch Good Growth Fund and the Dutch Fund for Climate and Development.

Your excellencies, in conclusion. We live in a rapidly changing and sometimes disruptive world. To solve global challenges together, cooperation is key. Therefore, the Netherlands is looking forward to further intensifying our cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners bilaterally, within the framework of the EU and, of course in the relevant UN ESCAP fora.

Thank you.