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Agenda item 3: Regional Cooperation for Resilient and Sustainable Urban Development in Asia and the Pacific

Remarks by Mr. Robert Abisoghomonyan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

Bangkok, 22 April 2025

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to share Armenia's vision regarding the issue of the "Regional Cooperation for Resilient and Sustainable Urban Development in Asia and the Pacific".

With the accelerated expansion of the cities worldwide, urbanization should be not merely a driver of economic growth, but rather a catalyst for environmental sustainability, resilience, and social inclusion. However, the challenges posed by climate change, infrastructure gaps, and growing social inequalities are too complex for nations to tackle them individually. In this regard, the importance of the regional cooperation, as a shared commitment to knowledge exchange, policy alignment, and collective action cannot be overestimated.

Armenia is not exempt from the developments and risks caused by the "urbanization tendencies". Today, about 64% of the population of Armenia lives in urban areas that generate almost 90% of the nation's gross domestic product, while the capital, Yerevan, accommodates nearly one-third of the entire population. This has urged us to take action towards greener urban development, to make our cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

The Program of the Government of Armenia for 2021-2026 contains a dedicated section on urban development, which identifies such key objectives as simplifying procedures, increasing transparency and accountability, and improving management mechanisms. These priorities are to be pursued within the context of preserving historical and cultural heritage and eliminating the negative impacts of urban development activities on the environment. In this regard, the Government has taken significant actions especially towards improving domestic legislation and urban development regulations.

In the meantime, Armenia has also been actively cooperating with its international partners, focusing on connectivity, transport infrastructure and efficiency, energy-efficient housing, and disaster resilience. In this regard, I would like to highlight our collaboration with the ADB and the Republic of Korea within the framework of the "Green Urban Planning in Armenia: Development of Energy Efficiency in Buildings" project, which serves as a good platform to share experience, practices, and know-how.

A number of other important urban sustainability projects, implemented in major Armenian cities in collaboration with international partners include.

- "Yerevan Urban Development Investment Project" launched in partnership with the Asian Development Bank aims to enhance Yerevan's inclusiveness through improved sustainable urban mobility and services, alongside strengthening institutional capacity for green and inclusive urban development,
- "Yerevan Green City Action Plan", implemented in cooperation with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development aims at achieving enhanced transport infrastructure and management, mitigated environmental impact, and energy efficiency in buildings and external lighting by the year of 2030.
- "Yerevan Water Supply Improvement Project", co-financed by the EBRD, European Investment Bank (EIB) and the EU Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF) is a critical project in terms of improving water resources management and addressing challenges in the water supply sector.
- "Gyumri Urban Roads Project" (EBRD) initiative focuses on modernizing public lighting, rehabilitating streets, and transitioning to low-emission public transport.

Armenia is committed to fostering regional cooperation through connectivity, infrastructure modernization, and economic integration. Investing in modern roads, railways, and logistic centers in our region will not only boost trade efficiency but also drive urban growth by fostering economic opportunities in key urban centers. Meanwhile, connectivity must also be sustainable, ensuring that roads, transport systems, and urban expansion do not strive at the cost of environmental degradation. In this vein, we prioritize smart urban planning, green mobility solutions, and energy-efficient infrastructure.

Due to the geographical location of Armenia, environmental risks, and seismic threats remain a pressing concern. Last year's flooding in Lori and Tavush regions caused significant damage to the settlements and infrastructure of those provinces and has raised now, more than ever, the necessity to achieve proper disaster risk assessment and risk prevention strategies. These measures are especially invaluable in light of earthquake-resistant construction, as Armenia is located in a seismic risk zone with geodynamic processes throughout its territory.

We believe that urban sustainability must go hand in hand with economic opportunity, digital transformation, and social inclusivity, creating cities that are not only prosperous but also resilient

to future crises. Sustainability, being a shared imperative, requires regional cooperation, particularly through exchanging knowledge and experience on smart urban planning, green technologies and infrastructure modernization.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate Armenia's commitment to enhanced regional and international multi-stakeholder cooperation for building a greener, smarter, and more resilient future in Urban areas, in line with the imperatives of the UN SDG 11.

Thank you.