Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:
Assalamu Alaikum and a very good afternoon.

It is an honour to speak before this enlightened audience at the 77th Session of the UN-ESCAP.

This is a timely event, particularly because we need stronger and better regional cooperation when the entire world is badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Excellencies,
The COVID-19 pandemic has reiterated the fact that the humanity is one, and sustainable development is not possible without global and regional cooperation. Echoing this vision, Bangladesh Prime Minister Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina has recently called for declaring the COVID-19 vaccine as a global public good. This reinforces the fact that stronger solidarity and collective actions are core for us to conquer this crisis. We need to act now to build a more resilient regional public health system. Establishing and strengthening regional integrated disease surveillance networks, establishing coordinated mechanisms to slow the spread of viruses across borders, harmonizing health protocols and standards among countries. Exploring pooled procurement mechanisms for vaccines can make a lot of difference in pandemic management.

For regional economic revitalization, we need stronger and better regional connectivity, wider climate change programs, enhanced cross-border trade and tourism, and digital integration.

Excellencies: With half of the world’s population and nearly half of its total GDP, the Asia-Pacific region needs to take innovative actions in regional cooperation and adapt the latest technologies to foster mutual complementarities in all aspects of development. We need a vision for a
wide cooperation in finance, trade, investment, human development and sharing knowledge, experience, and lessons.

Asia-pacific is the fastest growing region in the world and this region is in a unique position to develop a shared agenda to scale up the south-south cooperation. I am confident this session will come out with concrete actions to foster economic recovery from the COVID-19 through sustained regional development cooperation.

Thank you.