Dr. Renato U. Solidum, Jr.,
Undersecretary for Scientific and Technical Services, Department of Science and Technology, Philippines.

Chair,

Video recorded statement (Draft) (3 minutes)

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

[Introduction and Greetings]
• It was my honor, together with distinguished vice-Chairs from Indonesia, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Samoa, to be elected as Chair of the Third Session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology, and Innovation on 19 August 2020.
• Thirty eight member States with a total of 280 participants and observers attended.

[Main Part]

• I am pleased to summarize four key outcomes of the Committee as follows.
First, on accelerating regional cooperation, the Committee:

- Recognized that COVID-19 has further demonstrated the importance of digital connectivity and e-resilience, and recommended that the secretariat support expanding regional collaboration to scale up broadband Internet capacities for the effective use of technological innovation.
- It recognized with concern that the digital divide is widening in the region and called for the active participation of Governments, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders to bridge the digital divide.
- It also recommended to expand investments in next-generation infrastructure networks, and the need to accelerate research on co-deployment of fibre-optic cables along passive infrastructure networks, and the establishment of carrier-neutral Internet exchange points for improving quality and cost of Internet connectivity.

Second, on the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative, the Committee recommended:

- That the secretariat set up a drafting group as part of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Committee (AP-IS) to develop an action plan for the next phase of implementation of the AP-IS Master Plan for 2022–2026, for consideration and adoption by the Committee at its fourth session in 2022.
- With the support of the secretariat and implementing partners, I hope that this AP-IS action plan evolves into a regional blueprint for closing the digital divide by enabling us to work together on accelerating digital connectivity.
Third, on science, technology and innovation:

- The Committee emphasized the importance of putting inclusivity and sustainability at the heart of science, technology and innovation policies and strongly supported the secretariat’s work on this agenda.
- In this regard, the Committee recommended that the secretariat continue to support member States to develop inclusive technology and innovation policies for sustainable development.
- The Committee recognized innovative business models and practices as important sources of innovation and recommended that the secretariat continue to build the evidence base of effective policies and facilitate knowledge-sharing among policymakers in the Asia-Pacific region.

Fourth, on capacity development support, the Committee recommended that the secretariat:

- Continues to facilitate knowledge sharing and provide demand-driven capacity-building support on effective ICT policies, and science, technology and innovation strategies, to respond to COVID-19 and sustainable development through the work of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT) and the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT).

[Closing]
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Taking this opportunity, on behalf of member States at the Third Session of the Committee, I would like to express deep appreciation to the ESCAP secretariat for this arrangement.

Thank you.