Respected Chair and distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to address the Commission today in my capacity as Chair of the sixteenth session of the Governing Council of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (or CSAM), to brief you on the outcomes of the meeting which was attended by representatives of all nine members of the Council.

During its deliberations, the Governing Council took note of the serious impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on agricultural production, processing and sale, which have resulted in a loss of employment and reduction in farmers’ income. In this context, the Council recognized the important role of sustainable agricultural mechanization in enabling recovery and building resilience. It underscored the importance of promoting mechanization solutions to address smallholders’ requirements and reduce post-harvest losses; enabling capacity-building for producers; and promoting smart farming, among other issues.

The Governing Council was informed about the key recent results of CSAM’s work on sustainable agricultural mechanization including strengthening relevant capacities and response of member States to COVID-19, enabling climate-smart mechanization, providing expanded business opportunities for the private sector, and selection of two CSAM programmes as good practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

The Governing Council expressed appreciation for the work carried out by the Centre during 2020, especially in view of the constraints posed by the pandemic. It also expressed support for CSAM’s analytical work, and its work towards generating relevant policy recommendations for member States. The Council endorsed the Centre’s work report and financial status report for 2020 and workplan for 2021.

Among its recommendations, the Governing Council suggested that CSAM:

i. promote online knowledge exchange through webinars and online training
ii. expand its initiative for the harmonization of regional testing standards, and
iii. continue to promote safety in mechanization for the benefit of member States.

The Governing Council brings the following matter to the attention of the Commission: Given that the seventy-seventh session of Commission is being held as a hybrid in-person and online meeting, which makes it difficult to conduct voting via secret ballot
for the elections for the Governing Council for its next three-year term (2021–2024), as provided for in rule 41 of the rules of procedure of the Commission, the Council recommends that the Commission consider extending, on an exceptional basis, the term of the current members of the Council by one year, and hold the next elections at the seventy-eighth session of the Commission in 2022.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that CSAM is entirely funded through the extra-budgetary resources of ESCAP. I thank the Centre’s host country, China, as well as other countries for their valuable financial contributions and in-kind support. I urge all ESCAP members and associate members to continue to support the important work of CSAM.

Thank you for your attention.