Remarks
by
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at the
77th Session of the UN-ESCAP
“Building Back Better from Crises through Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific”
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- Excellency Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP;
- Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is my pleasure and honor today to participate virtually in the 77th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) under the theme: Building Back Better from Crises through Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific.

I am humbled to speak at the Special Body of LDCs focusing on “Strengthening the resilience of least developed countries in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic”.

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, I would like to express my profound thanks and high appreciation to ESCAP for hosting this important event and inviting me to share my insights.
Cambodia’s economy has not been spared from the crisis inflicted by this pandemic. The adverse impact on low-income households is particularly acute, imperiling the significant progress made in reducing extreme poverty since the 1990s. In the face of this COVID-19 crisis, regional and global cooperation is needed to adapt the rules-based multilateral system and make it work better for all. Covid-19 has accelerated structural shifts that were already taking place. Digital and technological adaptation have speeded up thanks to the common cause brought about by the pandemic to encourage all countries to work together. As a result, different institutions are cooperating across borders on treatments and vaccines.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!**

I would like to share with you the concerted efforts that have been made by the Royal Government of Cambodia to build the country’s resilience.

**First**, Cambodia has tried to collaborate with all nations around the world to fight this invisible enemy. **We have avoided racial discrimination and the attitude of the blame game**, which can lead to a breakup of unity, while the rest of the world is trying to remain united in fighting COVID-19. In the spirit of humanitarian and international solidarity, Cambodia allowed the Westerdam cruise ship, loaded with more than 2,200 passengers to dock in mid-February 2020. As of now, Cambodia has not only provided treatment to Cambodians but also foreign citizens free of charge. In addition, all Cambodians and foreign nationals currently residing and working in Cambodia can get vaccinated against COVID-19 at no charge.
Second, Cambodia believes that the battle against COVID-19 requires joint prudent decision-making, under the framework of multilateralism, by respecting international laws and the sovereignty of each individual nation, regardless of its size or wealth, with the United Nations and WHO as the core agencies. In this spirit, I would like to reiterate Cambodia’s support for the roles of the United Nations and the WHO in their global efforts to respond and fight against this pandemic.

Along with the United Nations, Cambodia would like to underline the importance and the urgency of COVID-19 vaccines as a global public good, accessible and affordable for all, of which supply and distribution shall be carried out in a humanitarian spirit for all countries, especially the most vulnerable ones. Going forwards, we must accept that we cannot go back to the pre-crisis period, and there is a need to adopt to a new normal and to build back better, which can be only attained through regional cooperation. At the same time, liquidity assistance is urgently needed for countries confronting health crises and external funding shortfalls, including through debt relief and financing.

Third, on policy coordination, Cambodia thinks that all countries should collaborate to avoid unwanted consequences inflicted by implementing protectionism policies. For instance, restrictions of exports of food and medicines to ensure enough supplies in exporting countries can lead to scarcity, price rises and panic in importing countries. Instead, the international community must vastly step up its support of policy national initiatives, including providing assistance to countries with limited health care capacity and channeling of funding for vaccine production as trials advance, so that adequate, affordable doses are quickly available to all countries.
Fourth, building on the record drop in greenhouse gas emissions during the pandemic, policymakers should both implement their climate change mitigation commitments and work together to scale up equitably designed carbon taxation or equivalent schemes.

Finally, to avoid a repeat of this COVID-19 catastrophe, the global community must act now by building global stockpiles of essential supplies and protective equipment, funding research and supporting public health systems, and putting in place effective modalities for delivering relief to the neediest.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate that Cambodia is ready to join all relevant development partners, both bilateral and multilateral, to contribute to the efforts to restoring the socio-economic situation and promoting prosperity for all as well as to build back better from crises through Regional Cooperation in the post-COVID 19 era. I believe that our efforts and collaboration will certainly enable us to achieve the sustainable development vision, in spite of some delays.

Finally, I wish for this Session to be fruitful and wish all participants and honorable delegates at the Session peace, harmony, health, prosperity and happiness.

Thank You!