Expert Group Meeting on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development

Tuesday, 19 July, 09:30 – 16:00 (Almaty Time),
UN Center, Almaty

Excellency, Mr Askar Zhambakin (아스카 잠바킨), Vice-Minister, MDDIAI, Kazakhstan
Distinguished delegates of SPECA members,
Colleagues and ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), I welcome you to the EGM and the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development.

First of all, I would like to express our appreciations to the Government of Kazakhstan for hosting the EGM and SPECA Working Group Meeting on Innovation and Technology on 19-20 July and for wonderful hospitality and facilitation of the meeting in Almaty. In particular, I would like to thank H.E. Mr Askar Zhambakin (아스카 잠바킨), for taking the time out from his busy schedule to be with us today. His presence here today is a testament to the importance of these meetings.

I also want to thank our long-standing partner and organizer, UN ECE

The Asia-Pacific region in 2030 will be a vastly different place from what it is now. Every day we witness how emerging technologies are rapidly transforming our development paradigms, bringing new sources of added value to production and consumption patterns and the way societies operate.

Of key concern is that the Central Asia region remains the digitally divided region in the world. In addition, the Central Asia region is behind the Northeast Asia region. The digital divide that emerged during the pandemic related to access, speed, gender and rural isolation is deepening socio-economic inequalities in new ways.

Nevertheless, new opportunities are also springing up from these challenges. Allow me to highlight three:

First, on the supply side, let’s work on digital connectivity continuously. The digital transformation has a critical opportunity to scale up our digital systems and productivity through digital connectivity infrastructure and digital technologies.

Second, in terms of the demand side, we could create new values and products by strengthening our investments in digital literacy and the capacity of people. They are consumers as well as creators of new values in the era of digital transformation, in particular with attention to the needs of children and youth at the forefront.
Third, like SPECA, we continue our cooperation and partnerships with governments including business sectors and social groups.

To support member States, ESCAP is working with member States to develop an action plan 2022-2026 of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative. In addition, ESCAP and the Government of Kazakhstan are cooperating to explore the modality of building Digital Solutions Centers for Central Asian countries.

ESCAP looks forward to the strong cooperation between SPECA member economies and ESCAP.

Thank you very much.