Distinguished Delegates of the Seventy-seventh session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Last month I had the pleasure of chairing the 8th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), held on the theme “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific”. It is my honor to address you today to briefly share some of the highlights of the 8th APFSD and briefly inform this forum of the outcomes of the meeting.

During the Forum, member States of ESCAP, intergovernmental bodies, UN bodies, specialized agencies and other stakeholders discussed regional perspectives on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.
The Forum noted that the COVID-19 pandemic was a developmental, environmental, human rights, and security concern and it called attention to its devastating socio-economic impacts across the region, and the resulting diminished prospects for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It noted that the disruptions of COVID-19 had revealed and exacerbated regional and national inequalities and vulnerabilities that had long exposed member States and their societies to economic and other shocks.

Recovery Measures in place include stimulus packages, programmes to improve living standards based on a “people first” principles and people-centered development; green recovery strategies, support to health and education sectors; various provisions to ease financial burdens; skilling people for income; and free vaccines for the most vulnerable.

The Forum reviewed regional progress on the Sustainable Development Goals by going through summary reports of nine parallel round tables for an in-depth assessment of the relevant Goals taking note of proposed strategies which are detailed in the reports.

The role of international solidarity in the COVID-19 response including through regional and inter-subregional cooperation was pointed as a way forward. The Forum also emphasized that despite the challenges of the pandemic, commitment to achieving the SDGs and implementation efforts continued, and advanced. Consideration of gender and human rights and for our collective voices to be heard in the process of regional discussions and
reporting on women and youth empowerment was the call of many delegations.

Members were appreciative to the United Nations development system’s actions to assess and support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda despite COVID-19 setbacks. Strengthening follow-up and review to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was also recognized citing Voluntary National Reviews as a sure way of ensuring collaborations across sectors, inclusion and innovation.

It is my hope that the Commission will consider the outcomes of the 8th APFSD in their upcoming deliberations taking ownership of our strategies to move forward as a region.

I wish you well. Thank you.