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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to address this session on behalf of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). I would like to begin by congratulating ESCAP for its leadership in bringing us together for this important platform on sustainable and inclusive regional cooperation.

This year's theme on resilient and sustainable urban development is both timely and urgent. At the recent Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD12), the key messages were clear: we must act faster, invest smarter, and work together to make progress on the 2030 Agenda.

The IAEA's mandate of '*Atoms for Peace and Development*' is fully aligned with these goals. As a science-based partner in development, we support at least 9 of the 17 SDGs through our Technical Cooperation programme. Across Asia and the Pacific, we deliver practical, demand-driven nuclear solutions through key Strategic Initiatives[1] in health, agriculture, energy, environment, and human capital—always tailored to national needs[2].

In urban centres and **health systems**, nuclear techniques are saving lives. Each year, cancer causes around 5 million deaths in the Asia-Pacific region[3], with over 70% of these occurring in developing countries[4]. In response, the IAEA launched the **Rays of Hope** initiative in 2022, together with the World Health Organization (WHO) to expand access to cancer diagnosis and treatment where it is needed most. This builds on more than 60 years of IAEA experience supporting Member States in the fight against cancer, with radiotherapy equipment, imaging

[1] *Health (Rays of Hope, ZODIAC), Agriculture (Atoms4Food), Energy and Climate (Atoms4NetZero, NUTEC Plastics), human capital development (Women in Nuclear, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship)*
[2] Prospects and Achievements of the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme in the 21st Century | IAEA
[3] Mortality from cancer | Health at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2024: OECD iLibrary (oecd-ilibrary.org)
[4] Rays of Hope: IAEA Flagship Initiative

technology, cancer control assessments[5], and training the specialized workforce that deliver this life-saving work to patients in the region. Today, we are enhancing that support through digital tools—such as virtual tumour boards[6], AI-assisted diagnostics, and telemedicine platforms[7]—to make cancer care more accessible, affordable, and scalable in resource-limited settings.

Beyond health, we are also supporting broader development goals, including food security for over 300 million people in the region[8] and pandemic preparedness. The **Atoms4Food** initiative, launched with FAO in 2023, provides countries with nuclear tools to improve crop resilience, reduce post-harvest losses, and ensure safer food systems. Through this, countries are better prepared to manage climate shocks and supply disruptions. Complementing this, our **ZODIAC** initiative continues to support national laboratories and global networks like the VETLAB Network to detect animal and zoonotic diseases early. This work helps protect public health and rural livelihoods—especially in areas where disease outbreaks can disrupt vulnerable economies and deepen poverty.

Nuclear science also supports green innovation and ocean health—both important for urban sustainability. Through the **NUTEC Plastics** initiative, countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand are piloting advanced plastic recycling using radiation technology. These efforts are now moving to industrial scale, supporting circular economy models and clean technology. This work also supports regional goals under *the G20 Osaka Blue Ocean Vision* and ESCAP's *Closing the Loop* project, which aim to reduce plastic waste in the ocean through better recycling and waste management. At the same time, the IAEA helps countries monitor and respond to ocean challenges—such as harmful algal blooms, blue carbon loss, mercury, ocean acidification, oil spills, chemical pollutants and radioactive substances—by using nuclear and isotopic techniques. These methods provide reliable data for good policymaking and long-term planning. These tools provide the robust data needed for science-based policymaking and long-term resilience planning.

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[5] imPACT reviews to improve comprehensive cancer control in Member States
[6] IAEA Helping Doctors Provide Online Cancer Expertise Across Borders | IAEA
[7] Digitalization in Cancer Control During the COVID-19 Pandemic | IAEA
[8] ADB's Work on Agriculture and Food Security: In-Depth | Asian Development Bank

Clean energy remains a top priority for Asia and the Pacific, where countries are working to meet climate goals, ensure energy security, and strengthen their commitments to net zero. There is a need for energy transitions that are inclusive, resilient, and technologically diverse. In this context, nuclear energy offers a reliable, low-carbon option that complements renewables, especially in countries facing growing energy demand and limited baseload capacity. The IAEA's **Atoms4NetZero** initiative supports Member States in evaluating how nuclear power—both conventional and advanced—can contribute to national climate strategies and long-term decarbonization pathways. As interest in Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) increases across the region, the IAEA is helping countries through dedicated SMR infrastructure guidance and training offered by the SMR School, enabling informed decision-making and future-ready energy planning.

We also recognize that these transitions require long-term investment and strong foundations. That is why the IAEA is working to position its technical cooperation projects as pipelines of science-based, investment-ready solutions. A key part of this is regulatory readiness. In December 2024, we launched the **Radiation Safety and Nuclear Security Infrastructure Development Project (RIDP)** for Asia and the Pacific. This initiative helps countries strengthen regulatory frameworks, build institutional capacity, and ensure nuclear technologies are deployed safely and responsibly. It also creates the enabling conditions to attract future financing and partnerships, moving beyond traditional funding models toward more sustainable and blended investment approaches.

To scale and sustain this impact, we rely on strong regional cooperation. Mechanisms such as the *Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology* (**RCA**) and the *Subregional Approach to the Pacific Islands* (**SAPI**) help countries share knowledge, strengthen infrastructure, and coordinate on common development challenges. These platforms promote South-South cooperation, connect Member States with technical partners, and link IAEA projects to regional development agendas. They also enable closer engagement with the UN system, multilateral banks, and centres of excellence—ensuring that peaceful nuclear technology is recognized as a valuable tool across sectors.

Sustainable development must also be inclusive. The IAEA is investing in the next generation of nuclear professionals across the region. Through fellowships, scholarships, and school

programmes, we are helping more young people—especially women—enter the nuclear field. Programmes like **Women in Nuclear**, the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship**, and our work in nuclear science education at both secondary and university levels promote gender equality, decent work, innovation, and stronger regional science and technology networks.

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Excellencies,

The IAEA remains a committed and practical partner for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. We thank our Member States for their continued trust and collaboration, and we look forward to deepening partnerships with ESCAP, the UN system, and regional actors to deliver impactful programmes, initiatives, and **science-based technology solutions that makes a difference**.

We stand ready to support countries as they pursue resilient, inclusive, and sustainable urban development across Asia and the Pacific, and we *welcome your engagement at upcoming events on Rays of Hope, NUTEC Plastics, and Atoms4NetZero.*

Thank you.