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Read by:

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) congratulates ESCAP on its 75th Anniversary and is pleased to join you today to discuss the important topic '*A common agenda to advance sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific*'. As we are midway through the implementation period of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and as countries in the region, and around the world, begin to address the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is indeed a profound need in the region for concerted efforts and a harmonized approach to accelerate progress – and where necessary change course – across a range of pressing development challenges.

At the outbreak of the pandemic more than two years ago, the IAEA mobilized resources, in the biggest emergency operation in the organization's history, to provide Member States with emergency assistance to cope with the urgent need for the rapid detection of COVID-19. Over 28 million people in 128 countries and territories, including 27 in the Asia and the Pacific region, have benefitted from this assistance.

And in June 2020, the IAEA launched the Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action (ZODIAC) to strengthen global preparedness for future pandemics by contributing to establish a worldwide network of national veterinary laboratories – many in Asia and the Pacific region - and strengthen their technical capacities for the monitoring, surveillance, early detection and control of zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19, Ebola and Zika. Under ZODIAC, Member States can benefit from joint research and development activities, and from the expertise of the joint laboratories of the IAEA and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in cooperation with partners such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The IAEA, in line with its 'Atoms for Peace and Development' mandate, supports countries in their efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In fact, nuclear applications can contribute directly to the achievement of at least nine of the 17 SDGs. The IAEA, through its technical cooperation programme, assists its Member States to address many of the key development challenges facing us today: climate change, food and energy security, pollution of the land and sea, and human health.

The use of nuclear technology in medicine, particularly in treating cancer and in diagnosing diseases, is one of the most widespread and best-known uses of nuclear science and technology. However, half of the cancer patients in low- and middle-income countries who need radiotherapy do not have access to it. To address this issue, a new IAEA initiative, Rays of Hope, has been launched to support Member States in improving access to safe radiation medicine for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

The IAEA has over six decades of experience in helping countries fight cancer. Through Rays of Hope, the IAEA forges partnerships and taps into diverse funding sources, including from governments, international financing institutions and the private sector, to ensure maximum reach, impact, and sustainability of support for cancer treatment.

In the area of the environment, plastic pollution has become a global challenge, and a priority for the IAEA. In May 2021, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Ms Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, participated in a panel chaired by the IAEA Director General, Mr Rafael Mariano Grossi, to discuss a new IAEA initiative, NUClear TEChnology for Controlling Plastic Pollution, known as NUTEC Plastics. The IAEA is stepping up its efforts to support Member States in the Asia and the Pacific region – and around the world – in moving towards a circular economy for plastic, using irradiation technology to support more effective recycling and marine monitoring of plastics using isotopic tracing techniques. With IAEA support, several countries in this region are taking steps to establish a pilot plant for plastic waste recycling, using nuclear technology such as electron beam and gamma irradiators.

Through a new regional IAEA technical cooperation project, the Agency is also working with Member States to establish a global network for monitoring and assessing the impact of marine plastic pollution.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We welcome the inclusion of Sustainable Development Goal 7, Affordable and Clean Energy, in this year's session of ESCAP. Attaining this goal will require transformative actions to ensure access to clean and affordable energy, and to accelerate the energy transition towards net zero emissions by 2050. Nuclear power is a reliable, low-carbon energy source. Many countries, including in this region, are now considering adopting it as part of their energy mix, and as part of their efforts to meet SDG7 and ensure access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy for all. In Asia and the Pacific region, several nuclear power units are already in operation, with others to be commissioned within the next couple of years.

Currently, nearly 450 reactors around the world supply various nations with nuclear power, providing about 10% of the world's electricity, or about 4% of the global energy mix. This share is expected to increase in the coming decades as the world moves towards net zero emissions by 2050.

The IAEA helps countries to meet their growing demand for energy for development while improving energy security, reducing environmental and health impacts, and mitigating climate change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We welcome ESCAP's continuing effort to strengthen subregional cooperation to advance sustainable development in this region. The IAEA has been consistent for many decades in the promotion of South-South cooperation, triangular cooperation, and regional collaboration. This includes the Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology for Asia and the Pacific (RCA). Now in its 50th year, the RCA supports cooperation, among its 22 State Parties, in the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology. Just last month, a joint IAEA-RCA publication on the socioeconomic impacts of non-destructive testing and of radiotherapy was issued.

The IAEA has also adopted a Sub-Regional Approach to the Pacific Islands (SAPI), specifically designed for the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Member States of the IAEA (Fiji, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu). This sub-regional approach focuses on enhancing agricultural productivity, improving the diagnosis and treatment of non-communicable diseases such as cancer, monitoring the marine and coastal environment, and managing water resources effectively.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The IAEA looks forward to strengthening its cooperation with ESCAP in delivering those programmes and initiatives, as well as other programmes of mutual interest, to support countries in the region as they work towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

Thank you.