India – Country Statement on
“Accelerating action for and delivery of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific”
7th Session of Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
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Madam Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for this opportunity for India to share its perspectives on the theme of the forum, “Accelerating action for and delivery of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific”. India is acutely aware that as the home to one-sixth of all humanity, it has a critical role and responsibility towards the success of the 2030 Agenda. With a view to making the Decade of Action very productive and decisive India is taking a host of initiatives encompassing all the Goals and targets. Some key initiatives are highlighted below.

1. As we focus on accelerating progress on SDGs, the COVID 19 pandemic has spread across the world including our region and is undermining action on most of the Goals. It has to be stopped in its track for all our efforts on SDGs to come to fruition. India firmly supports joint global action to address the COVID-19 pandemic. It has extended medical assistance to several countries and has operationalized the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund with an initial contribution of USD 10 million. Domestically, India’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic includes a USD 276 billion relief and economic stimulus package, comprehensive health coverage for front-line workers and direct cash transfers for the most vulnerable. The government is leading a multi-pronged effort to ramp up the public health infrastructure, protect jobs and energise various economic sectors. The economic stimulus also embraces major reforms in agriculture and industry with long term consequences. The pandemic response has also been used as an opportunity for forging and strengthening partnerships among the state, civil society and the private sector.

2. Fighting its war against poverty with a clear focus on economic growth and social inclusion, India has halved the incidence of multidimensional poverty by lifting 271 million from out of it, while reducing extreme income poverty from 21.2 per cent in 2011 to 13.4 per cent in 2015.

3. Considerable success has been achieved in improving access, affordability and quality of sanitation, nutrition and health services. India achieved universal sanitation in all its 603,175 villages in 2019. There have also been sharp reduction in child and maternal mortality, and stunting levels. Progressing towards universal health coverage, accessible, affordable, and quality health care has been institutionalized under Ayushman Bharat, which is arguably the world’s largest health protection scheme, providing an annual cover of about USD 6,667 to 100 million families (500 million Individuals) from economically weaker sections.

4. The principle of ‘leave no one behind’ is enshrined in Indian Constitution. Social inclusion is the cornerstone of the national development agenda which entails both legislative and executive action to universalize access to basic services and address the challenges faced by the vulnerable communities in the spheres of nutrition, health, education, employment and social security. While legislation and interventions focus on protecting and mainstreaming the vulnerable communities (children, women, disabled people, disadvantaged social groups, transgender persons etc.), intersectionality and its impact on accentuating the existing vulnerabilities is addressed by developing multi-sector and convergent programmes. Financial
Inclusion, a major instrument to promote social inclusion, was greatly aided by the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity – near-universal access to bank accounts under the Jan Dhan Yojana; bio-metric identity for about 90 per cent of people and access to mobile phones and internet services for over 665 million people. This has propelled the poor, especially over 200 million women, into the mainstream financial system, accelerating their economic empowerment through new avenues of credit, insurance, and Direct Benefit Transfers.

5. Country-wide initiatives are taken to improve gender equality including specific ones to boost employability and economic participation of women. The scheme of "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) is effective in protecting the girl child and supporting her welfare. Maternity benefits have been enhanced with greater health and nutrition care, maternity leave and conditional cash transfers. Over the last five years, women’s enrolment in long-term skill development courses as well as access to entrepreneurship credit has increased manifold.

6. India is comprehensively addressing the climate action and environmental sustainability agenda by developing clean and efficient energy systems and resilient urban infrastructure as well as implementing planned bio-diversity conservation and eco-restoration measures. Progress achieved so far include full rural electrification, access of clean cooking fuel by 80 million poorest households since 2015, Renewable Energy installed capacity growing by 75 per cent between 2014 and 2020, and energy-saving appliances reducing CO₂ emission annually by 38 million tonnes. India has launched the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the International Solar Alliance to leverage global partnerships.

7. One of the fastest growing emerging market economies, India aspires to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025 with an inclusive and sustainable growth trajectory. The forward push involves aggressive reforms to stimulate manufacturing, investment and infrastructure growth, technological innovation and entrepreneurship. Major reforms include a single Goods and Services Tax regime, FDI liberalization, Insolvency and Bankruptcy legislation, Ease of Doing Business Reforms, and flagship programmes like ‘Make In India’, ‘Startup India’, and ‘Skill India’ by the Government of India. These policies, combined with a young population, and burgeoning innovation and business ecosystem, make for a robust engine of economic progress.

8. Regional connectivity is an integral part of India's International economic initiatives. However, we firmly believe that such connectivity initiatives must be based on universally recognized international norms, good governance, rule of law, openness, transparency and equality. They must follow principles of financial responsibility and must be pursued in a manner that respects sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Excellencies, the Government of India sets great stores by global partnerships and has always striven to spread amity and build regional as well as international networks. During the Decade of Action, India will only step up its efforts to multiply cooperation and partnership.
I thank you Madam Chair.