United States Permanent Representative Ed Sagurton’s Statement at the UNESCAP Transport Ministerial Senior Officials Meeting
Tuesday, December 14, 2021, 1400-1430

Agenda item 3: Major issues in transport - (a) Towards an efficient and resilient transport and logistics network and mobility

Thank you, chairs, for your leadership throughout this Ministerial. The United States attaches great importance to our relationship with ESCAP and its members in the region. The supply-chain theme of this session is timely: supply chains are central to our engagement throughout the region and play a critical role in ending the primary and secondary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States continues working closely with our partners to help businesses diversify supply chains and tackle bottlenecks to support global transport systems and international commerce. Promoting an efficient and resilient transportation network between the United States and the Asia and Pacific region remains a top priority for the U.S. government.

On October 31, President Biden held a Summit on Global Supply Chain Resilience with the European Union and 14 partner countries—including a number of ESCAP member states—to foster greater international cooperation on near-term supply chain disruptions. At the summit, President Biden announced that Secretary of State Blinken and Secretary of Commerce Raimondo will hold a multi-stakeholder forum next year along with foreign counterparts to establish next steps to build greater global supply chain resilience. This forum will bring together stakeholders from governments, private companies, labor organizations, and others to continue work on challenges including information sharing and transparency, sustainable development, and security of supply.

To address structural challenges, the United States has taken an innovative approach in many of the areas mentioned in the UNESCAP report, especially improving infrastructure and promoting intermodality in the transportation sector. Our success has focused on building resilient supply chains in four key areas: semiconductors, advanced batteries, pharmaceuticals, and critical materials and minerals, and we have focused our efforts on communicating and coordinating with our partners to shore up these sectors. We welcome the opportunity to share our lessons-learned and best practices with other member states, and we look forward to learning from you, too.

This is a challenging time but this Ministerial offers important solutions and opportunities to build back better than ever before. Section III of the report prepared for this session proposed ways we can work together to improve connectivity and develop the land-based and maritime transport systems that will make our supply chains more resilient to shocks like COVID-19. We second the report’s optimism and its call for improved communication, information sharing, and coordination among governments and the private sector, and we agree that there are opportunities to leverage digitization to make regional supply chains and commerce smarter, more efficient, and more resilient.
Looking forward, we see reason for optimism and much room for partnership. Let’s chart a course to strengthen and diversify the entire supply chain ecosystem over the long term—including raw materials, intermediate and finished goods, manufacturing, shipping, logistics, warehousing, and distribution. At the recent supply chain summit, participating governments issued a statement of shared principles on supply chain resilience, including transparency, diversity, openness, predictability, security, adaptability, and sustainability. We encourage that type of effort to identify and promote shared principles and we welcome those conversations here at ESCAP.

Supply chains include diverse stakeholders, from private companies to workers and labor organizations, to indigenous communities and academic institutions. Secretary of State Blinken and Secretary of Commerce Raimondo’s multi-stakeholder forum next year will bring the community together and help establish next steps to build greater global supply chain resilience. We look forward to continuing this conversation and partnership at that forum with many of our ESCAP and other partners.