Speech CdP BAN - UNESCAP 81th SESSION COMMISSION

"Regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific"

Madam Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is a pleasure and an honor to join you here today during the 81th Commission Session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.
- The Asia-Pacific is undoubtedly a key region in the world, being the world's primary growth region and home to two thirds of the world's population. Countries in this part of the world are vital partners in overcoming global challenges when it comes to themes of stability and security, climate and sustainable development.
- As one of the two EU countries that are Members of ESCAP, I am honored to share some thoughts on this year's theme of regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development.
- This theme is particularly relevant as 2.2 billion people live in urban areas in the Asia-Pacific and we expect urbanization to continue in the foreseeable future. As such, it is crucial that we reach the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, so that we may ensure that our cities are liveable, sustainable, and resilient for the generations to come.
- Regional and international cooperation are key in this. While on different scales, we are all facing similar challenges, the Netherlands and the EU included. Ageing populations, energy and climate-related risks like rising temperatures or flooding require us to rethink how we design our public spaces and infrastructure.
- Fortunately, these challenges also present us with opportunities to innovate and collaborate. For example, in the Netherlands, a focus area has been air pollution. In 2020, the Clean Air Accord was signed by different levels of government in the Netherlands. The national government, all 12 provinces and more than 100 municipalities in the Netherlands take part in the Clean Air Accord, and through the it, are required to take additional steps to improve the air quality - like making our cities greener. Not only does this improve air quality, it also cools down our cities, making them more resistant to rising temperatures.

- These challenges however, are not limited to borders.. Therefore, the Netherlands and the EU seek to solve global challenges together with our ESCAP partners. The EU Indo-Pacific Strategy outlines commitment to such collaboration, in priority areas such as Sustainable and inclusive prosperity; Green transition and Connectivity. The EU has formed Green Alliances and Partnerships with several ESCAP Member States to tackle these challenges together.
- Urbanization is an undeniable trend and plays a huge role in the development agenda. Only by cooperating and sharing best practices can we realize sustainable development agendas such as Agenda 2030 or the Paris Agreement.
- The Netherlands continues to strengthen its cooperation with the Asia-Pacific on a bilateral, EU and of course the UN ESCAP level for the years to come.

Thank you!