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81st session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

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Draft Country Statement (Abridged Version)

At the outset, Pakistan aligns itself with the overarching theme of this 81st session *"Regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific"*. We recognize that inclusive and sustainable development is the cornerstone for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Mr. Chair,

2. We have gathered today at a critical time. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which offers a roadmap to transform our world, is far from realization. The implementation of SDGs is halted and reversed by the series of shocks suffered by the global economy – the COVID-19 pandemic, the more frequent and more devastating impacts of climate change and the conflicts raging across the world. The gap between rich and poor is growing. The development gains on reducing poverty and hunger have been reversed. The debt burden for developing countries has increased manifolds. Financing for development has not improved.

3. The need for inclusive and sustainable development in order to address these multifaceted challenges faced by the world and our region cannot be over emphasized.

Mr. Chair,

4. Asia and the Pacific is home to more than half of the world's population and is a dynamic engine of global economic growth. However, this growth has been accompanied by complex challenges. These challenges have underscored the urgent need for integrated, forward-looking policies that promote sustainable and inclusive development.

5. One of the most significant emerging policy issues in Asia and the Pacific is the rapid pace of urbanization. Our region is witnessing unprecedented growth of urban populations, which presents both opportunities and challenges.

6. Pakistan has the highest rate of urbanization in South Asia, with the UN Population Division projecting that, by 2025, nearly half the country's population will be living in

cities. We are prioritizing integrated urban planning, the development of affordable housing, and the expansion of basic services such as water, sanitation, and public transport to ensure that urban growth is managed sustainably and inclusively.

Mr. Chair,

8. It is essential to ensure that the benefits of economic growth reach all segments of society. Pakistan has instituted a Social Protection Policy Framework to focus our efforts for a harmonized approach for all Pakistanis. Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) (formerly known as the Ehsaas Programme), for the poor is our landmark social security and poverty alleviation programme aimed at the welfare of the people.

10. In the digital age, technology and innovation are powerful enablers of inclusive and sustainable development. Pakistan is investing in digital infrastructure, e-governance, and innovative ecosystems to improve service delivery and tap the economic opportunities.

Mr. Chair!

12. Achieving inclusive and sustainable development requires adequate financing. We would like to emphasize the importance of international support, including concessional financing and technology transfer, to assist developing countries in overcoming financial constraints.

13. In this context, Pakistan believes that the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development being held from 30 June to 3 July 2025 in Seville, Spain, can play an important role. We are hopeful for a successful outcome of this important Conference.

Mr. Chair!

14. Despite multifold challenges, Pakistan has embedded the principles of sustainable development into our Vision 2025 and our 5Es national economic transformation plan. The 5Es plan – (encompassing Exports, E-Pakistan, Environment & Climate Change, Energy & Infrastructure, and Equity & Empowerment –) aims to create a holistic and integrated approach to sustainable development.

15. However, no country can address these challenges in isolation. These efforts demand global support. Pakistan underscores the critical importance of regional cooperation as a catalyst for sharing best practices and mobilizing resources for inclusive and sustainable development.

16. Finally, Pakistan reaffirms its commitment to the 2030 Agenda and to working with all Member States to build a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable world.

I thank you.