Papua New Guinea Country Statement on Agenda item 3: "Regional Cooperation for Resilient and Sustainable Urban Development in Asia and the Pacific"

Delivered by: Mr. Koney Samuel, Secretary, Department of National Planning and Monitoring, Papua New Guinea

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Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to thank the Kingdom of Thailand for your leadership and hospitality for the Delegates of the 81st Commission Session of the UNESCAP. On behalf of the Government and the People of Papua New Guinea, I convey our sincerest condolence to the people of Myanmar and the Kingdom of Thailand for the loss of lives in the recent earthquake.

I am grateful for this opportunity to represent my country and contribute to this regional forum to discuss the pressing issues of urbanization, population growth, climate change and other related challenges and opportunities in our region.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Papua New Guinea faces a significant demographic challenge with an estimated population growth rate of 4.8% annually. This unprecedented growth rate has contributed to rapid urbanization. We have seen a significant proportion of our population migrating from rural areas to urban centres in search of better socio-economic opportunities. This presents both challenges and opportunities in our efforts to create inclusive sustainable cities, and climate resilient infrastructure to support our diverse communities.

To address these challenges, our Government has undertaken various policy initiatives and programs to support climate-resilient urban development. The National Urbanization Policy 2010–2030 promotes sustainable urban planning, improved public infrastructure and the provision of essential services. We are also working on the ten-year National Housing Policy 2024–2034, which will focus on affordable housing for all our citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Papua New Guinea will turn 50 years of independence on the 16th of September this year. We have come a long way as a country despite myriad of development challenges we face in the course of the last 50 years. The Vision 2050 aspires for Papua New Guinea to be a developed country by 2050. Our Government recently launched the Medium Term Development Plan 4 (2023–2027) with clear sectoral indicators and targets to progress our overarching Vision 2050 and also our commitment to the 2030 Agenda on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Our country is richly endowed with natural resources that can be translated into tangible, resilient and sustainable assets that can benefit our people and build a sustainable future.

However, Papua New Guinea faces critical development challenges in successfully meeting our development goals. These challenges include economic volatility, social disparities, law and order issues, climate change and emerging global trade issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Papua New Guinea will be presenting its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the progress of implementation of the SDG at the High-Level Political Forum in New York in July this year. We want to demonstrate to the UN member States, how we are tracking on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The report will highlight the country's achievements, challenges, and opportunities.

In this occasion, I wish to extend our sincere appreciation to our development partners and regional organisations such as the UNESCAP for their invaluable support to the Government of PNG in the preparation of our second VNR 2025.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Going forward, in line with the 81st Commission Session, PNG identifies several key opportunities in the following areas:

Strengthening Inclusive Infrastructure: Investing in infrastructure that is accessible and inclusive for all segments of the population will promote social equity and economic growth. This includes public transportation, water and sanitation, and other essential services.

Enhancing Climate Resilience: Integrating climate change considerations into urban planning will help mitigate risks and protect our cities from future environmental threats. We can adopt innovative technologies and practices that support sustainable development.

Public-Private Partnerships: Engaging with the private sectors can unlock resources and expertise to improve urban infrastructure and services. Collaborations across sectors will be crucial to achieving our urban development goals.

Regional and International Cooperation: Strengthening partnerships within the Asia-Pacific region will enhance our capacity to respond to urbanization challenges. Collaboration in knowledge sharing, technical assistance, and policy alignment will be essential for fostering resilient communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In closing, Papua New Guinea is committed to tackling the complex issues surrounding population growth and urbanisation with a collaborative and innovative approach.

By prioritizing inclusive and resilient infrastructure and integrating climate considerations into our policies, we can lay the groundwork for sustainable urban development.

Let us work together to harness the opportunities available to us, ensuring urban centres thrive and serve as an engine for inclusive and sustainable development for all our citizens, Leaving No One Behind.

I thank you.