Country Statement by H.E. Amb. Kim Hee Sang
Deputy Minister for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Korea
on the Occasion of the 81th session of UN ESCAP Commission
April 21, 2025

Minister Arzu Rana Deuba,

Executive Secretary Dr. Armida Salsiah ALISJAHBANA,

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Executive Secretary for her leadership in organizing this meaningful session.

I also wish to commend all the staff of the ESCAP Secretariat for their dedication and tireless efforts.

We are living through a period of profound challenges worldwide. The climate crisis, advancement of new technologies, and drastic demographic shifts are threatening our daily lives and intensifying disparities across and within countries.

In this context, **"inclusive and sustainable development"** is really an urgent task.

Since its inception, ESCAP has been instrumental in advancing this vision, I believe it is again a valuable platform for dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and regional cooperation for this important task.

Inclusive and sustainable development has already been priorities of the Korea's domestic policy. Korea is not immune to **climate-induced disasters**, as evidenced by recent large-scale wildfires.

To address this, the government has implemented successive Five-Year National Action Plans since 2011, focusing on: (a) early warning systems; (b) resilient infrastructure; (c) disaster information dissemination; and (d) insurance schemes for vulnerable communities.

To resolve the issue more fundamentally, Korea is committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

To this end, we adopted the National Framework Plan for Carbon Neutrality and Green Growth, which presents a mid- to long-term roadmap driving green investment and fostering private sector involvement.

Core measures—such as the Climate Response Fund, Emissions Trading System (ETS), and Korean Green Taxonomy (K-Taxonomy)—serve as strong policy signals that steer private capital toward our climate goals.

We are also advancing a bottom-up approach by assisting local governments in crafting customized strategies under the national framework, thereby promoting an inclusive and regionally equitable transition.

These domestic efforts are matched by **Korea's strong and sustained commitment to regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific**.

In 2024, Korea pledged 2.1 trillion KRW—about **1.6 billion USD—in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the Asia-Pacific**. This represents 41.8% of Korea's total bilateral aid, focusing on digital, health, and environment which are essential for inclusive and sustainable development.

There is no doubt that **our cooperation with ESCAP plays a critical role** in advancing these efforts.

Inclusivity and sustainability have been core themes of numerous projects supported by the Korea–ESCAP Cooperation Fund (KECF).

The **Sub-regional Office for East and North-East Asia(SRO-ENEA)**, located in Incheon, has strengthened environmental cooperation in the region by implementing North East Asian Sub-regional Programme for Environmental Cooperation(NEASPEC), while the **Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT)**, also located in Incheon, has provided ICT training programs for developing countries to ensure that no one is left behind.

This year, Korea is serving as **Chair of APEC**. We want to take this opportunity to enhance the regional cooperation for inclusive and

sustainable development by promoting open, innovative, and inclusive growth across the Asia-Pacific, in line with the Putrajaya Vision. We are focusing on two priorities: (a) regional cooperation on artificial intelligence (AI); and (b) responses to demographic change.

We believe we can promote inclusive and sustainable development by enhancing innovation capacity across the Asia-Pacific and fully harnessing the transformative potential of AI.

Korea has proposed outlining future AI strategies and sharing best practices for capacity-building in AI.

This should be accompanied by a collaborative investment initiative led by the private sector to develop regional AI infrastructure.

Addressing **demographic change** is equally critical to inclusive and sustainable development.

In addition to confronting declining birth rates and aging populations, it is vital to implement cross-sectoral reforms in labor, education, healthcare, and finance.

Korea has proposed developing a demographic data platform, building capacity in data literacy and policymaking, and conducting a mapping exercise to identify relevant agencies responsible for demographic policy.

Distinguished delegates,

The future of our region depends on the choices we make together. The greater the challenges, the stronger our collective response must be. This ESCAP session is a crucial step toward more inclusive and sustainable development.

The Republic of Korea is firmly committed to walking this path of cooperation and solidarity—side by side with ESCAP and all of you.

Thank you. /END/