Country Statement of the Solomon Islands for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific S81st Commission Session

To be delivered by Minister Hon Rexson Ramofafia

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

Chair of the 81st Session,

Executive Secretary of ESCAP,

Excellences, Distinguished Delegates

I bring warm greetings from the Solomon Islands and express our appreciation to ESCAP for convening this timely 81st Session under the theme "Regional Cooperation for Resilient and Sustainable Urban Development."

1. Relevance of the Theme

This theme resonates strongly with the Solomon Islands. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), we face critical challenges in managing urban growth, infrastructure limitations, service delivery gaps, and rising climate-related risks.

Regional cooperation in the Asia Pacific is more important than ever with the global shifts including the topical reciprocal tariffs which among other signals a departure from rules-based approach to international trade.

In our 2019 census, 27.6% of population lives in our urban areas and mostly in our capital. The challenge we have besides the growth seen in urbanization in the past two decades is unplanned urbanization, which gives rise to host of other socioeconomic, environmental and vulnerability challenges. Nevertheless, we recognize that urban development is central to our broader national efforts to build sustainability, equity, and resilience.

2. National Development Strategy

Our National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016-2035 lays out a vision for "Improving the social and economic livelihoods of all Solomon Islanders." It prioritizes inclusive economic growth, improved service delivery, climate resilience, and sustainable urban and rural development. The NDS is the implementing vehicle for SDGs in our national context. In line with the global report on SDGs, our recent mid-term review of our NDS reveal that we are off-track with respect to the NDS objectives as well as with respect to most SDGs. We remain committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda in full alignment with our national priorities.

3. ESCAP Support to MNPDC

We sincerely thank ESCAP for its direct technical and financial support to the Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination (MNPDC). Key areas include:

- Review of the Solomon Islands Project Planning Manual (2022);
- Development of the 2nd Solomon Islands Voluntary National Review Report on the SDGs (2024);
- Development and finalization of the Solomon Islands-LDC Smooth Transition Strategy (2025) that has been endorsed by the Solomon Islands cabinet early this month;
- Ongoing technical inputs to the "Unlocking Potential for Productive Sectors in Solomon Islands" report.

4. ESCAP Support to Other Ministries

We also acknowledge ESCAP's broader support, including:

- Climate finance readiness and resilience training with the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM),
- Trade facilitation and digital trade assessments with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration (MCILI),
- Capacity-building on national statistical systems with the Solomon Islands National Statistics Office (SINSO).

We value this continued partnership with ESCAP in helping Solomon Islands transition toward inclusive and sustainable development.

5. Concluding Remarks

We reaffirm our commitment to regional cooperation through ESCAP, and we call for continued collaboration and increased support to address the unique challenges of SIDS. Together, we can advance a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable urban future for our region.

Thank you.