Madam Under-Secretary-General;
Fellow delegates;
Esteemed ambassadors and colleagues.
Salam-u-Alaykum.

I am honored to be addressing you today.
Thank you for holding this session of the assembly amidst all the challenges and difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
With nearly 150 million infections and three million deaths reported in the past sixteen months, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be the most tragically impactful global event of our lifetimes. Beyond the people infected and the lives lost, the pandemic has affected people’s lives in an unprecedented fashion on a global scale. Long lasting physical and psychological complications in survivors of the infection, job losses, school and university closures, increased poverty, mental pressures as a result of quarantine measures—these, coupled with underreporting of infections and deaths, keep us from grasping the true scope of the harm and the destruction that the pandemic has engendered. It is, thus, apt and important to focus the agenda of this session on ways and means to
understand, rebuild, and recover from the adverse and tragic consequences of the pandemic.

Afghanistan, like the rest of the world, has suffered greatly from COVID-19. Afghan students were deprived of a proper education because of poor and inequitable access to digital technology. Afghan citizens had to face higher demands, lower supplies, and increased prices for basic necessities like food, medicines, and hygiene products. And finally, as the consequences of the pandemic put a spotlight on the critical need for technology and digital connectivity, it highlighted the unequal and inequitable access to them in Afghanistan. These challenges are not unique to Afghanistan: citizens in every member state of this commission have experienced these challenges to some extent, greater or smaller.

Guided by the Sustainable Development Goals, in order to build a better world and in order to be better prepared in the future, we must address these issues in a whole-of-society and whole-of-planet approach. As the speedy and swift development of multiple safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines has demonstrated, humanity can achieve great feats when working in unison to face our common challenges and solve our common problems. We must commit to standardizing healthcare and improving access to healthcare for all citizens of the region. We must facilitate trade by making investment and the transportation of goods easier, safer, and more efficient by using technology and digitalization. And, we must invest in broadening digital connectivity and access to modern technology in the region. These, among other issues, will be central to the upcoming panel debates of the session, and I want to assure you of the active and enthusiastic participation of the Afghan delegation.
Despite all these challenges, the Afghan government, aided by the international community, has tried to provide assistance and relief to our citizens. A national food provision program named ‘Destarkhwane Milli’, a cash transfer program named ‘Reach’, a financial support program for small and medium enterprises are some examples of governmental response to lessen the impact of the pandemic. Afghan government is working hard to establish a system of e-governance, having enacted the e-governance legislation. We are committed to connecting digitally with our regional and global partners to improve trade and to make humanitarian efforts more easily accessible. And, finally, Afghan healthcare providers are working overtime to supply and administer COVID-19 vaccinations to all our citizens. I want to thank our regional and global partners for providing vital and necessary assistance in procuring these vaccines. I wish us all great resolve until we are past these difficult times and have achieved global mass immunity.

Thank you,

Dr. Karim Hamed Faryabi
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