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Agenda Item 2 (a) Theme topic, “Building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific”

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Madam Chair, distinguished delegates and colleagues,

It is an honor for me to address the Commission for the first time.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) welcomes and congratulates ESCAP for the publication of the theme study for the 77th Commission session, Beyond the Pandemic: Building Back Better from Crises in Asia and the Pacific.

We fully support the policy recommendations made in the theme study, which confirm and provide additional significant evidence to many of the recommendations that emerged from the series of webinars, and accompanying briefs, organised by UNDRR in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic – particularly those, around the need to expand and strengthen social protection to leave no one behind, promote green resilience recoveries, build resilience across businesses and supply chains, and maintain the balance between human activity and nature. Moreover, its central recommendation of enhancing regional cooperation is key since countries are lagging in achieving Target (f) of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which calls for increasing international cooperation to developing countries.

Moving forward, it is clear that COVID-19 has exposed gaps in how countries plan for and manage their disaster risks. To prevent the occurrence of another disaster of this scale, it is critical that countries re-examine their current disaster risk governance mechanisms to ensure that they are multi-hazard in scope; involve all relevant sectors and institutions, as well as other stakeholders; and address the needs of all members of society, including the most vulnerable. Priority 4 of the Sendai Framework is expressly focused on Building Back Better and provides significant guidance for a resilient recovery.

To that end, UNDRR stands ready to support countries to revise or develop their national disaster risk reduction strategies and ensure the integration of biological hazards as recommended in the 2016 Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework, hence to safeguard development gains.

To build back better from COVID-19, in December 2020, UNDRR convened the Asia-Pacific Partnership for Disaster Risk Reduction (APP-DRR) to capture the region’s priorities around building resilience. UNDRR is incorporating those priorities in the draft Asia-Pacific Action Plan 2021-2024 for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework. To ensure regional ownership and engagement in the Plan, UNDRR will engage with countries and stakeholders through a series of consultations in the coming weeks.

I thank you.