Acceptance speech
of the Deputy Prime Minister – Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan H.E.
Mr. Mukhtar Tleuberdi at the 77th session of the UN ESCAP
(April 26, 2021, 12:10)

Madam Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Kazakhstan highly commends a crucial role played by UN ESCAP in promoting inclusive and sustainable economic and social development, reducing inequalities, and expanding opportunities of the people in Asia and the Pacific – the largest and the fastest growing region of the world.

The UN ESCAP’s role is becoming even more essential today, when the entire humanity is facing global transformation amid unprecedented challenges.

The greatest challenge of our age – COVID-19 pandemic – continues to grow and cause deep suffering in every country of Asia and Pacific.

The pandemic has exposed our vulnerabilities, deepened existing inequalities among peoples and nations, and reversed our collective developmental gains.

Therefore, the main topic of our current session is “Building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific”.

I wish to thank the Secretariat for its theme study on the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic in countries of Asia and the Pacific, which is centered around four critical interconnected areas: sustained recovery, social protection, strengthened connectivity, and climate change.

Distinguished delegates,

We must remember that in crisis comes an opportunity. Every crisis causes us to reconsider our present and propels us into the better future. We can build back for a better, greener, more efficient, fair and inclusive world.

Recovering from this crisis will need truly innovative solutions and urgent collective efforts that no country can do alone. It will require a whole-of-society, whole-of-government and whole-of-the-world approach, strong political will, and bold leadership, driven by compassion and solidarity.

Our main challenge is the post-pandemic socio-economic recovery and practical deliverables within Agenda 2030.

Recovery from the pandemic needs to begin with the development of strong and resilient health systems with equitable and unhindered access to vaccines. We must take the politics out of the vaccine and ensure that vaccine production and distribution is implemented on the basis of science and global public health needs.
The current economic crisis has set back progress to all of us, but vulnerable groups of countries, such as Least Developed Countries (LDC), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been particularly hard-hit by the pandemic.

These countries have faced a deadly combination of declining foreign investment, trade, and remittances; growing debt burdens; and severely reduced fiscal spaces. As a result, LLDC economies contracted an average 2.4% in 2020, pushing many people into poverty.

Therefore, it is critical to financially support vulnerable countries in boosting the urgently needed resilient infrastructure and trade facilitation mechanisms for the smooth flow of goods which is critical to their recovery.

In this regard, President of Kazakhstan Tokayev at the High-Level Event on International Debt Architecture and Liquidity on 29 March 2021 called for relieving the debt burden on national budgets of developing countries in exchange for increased investments in health care and regional development projects.

We believe that our urgent coordinated action on these proposals will help us to get back on track for an accelerated SDG Decade of Action – probably the “most critical decade” of our generation.

A comprehensive UN Roadmap to accelerate implementation of the 2014-2024 Vienna Programme of Action, initiated by Kazakhstan as the Global Chair of the LLDC Group in 2020-2021, is another important tool in this regard.

The pandemic clearly demonstrated that our countries need joint efforts in achieving the digital transformation, necessary to better meeting today’s societal challenges.

Another priority area for the post-COVID recovery is environmental protection. Today the climate change is an existential crisis for our civilization and there is no alternative for all our nations to developing decarbonized economy, green technology, efficient land and water management.

Current crisis gives us unique opportunity to put environmental protection at the forefront of international agenda.

Climate change is one of the top priorities of Kazakhstan. Last December at the Climate Ambition Summit, President Tokayev has pledged to reach carbon neutrality by 2060.

Tackling climate change is indeed costly, however inaction could lead to fatal damage. The loss of life and economic disaster caused by the pandemic are signs of what will happen if we do not eliminate the world’s carbon emissions.

**Dear friends,**

Asia and Pacific is the vast area with 60 percent of the world population, economic and trade volume. To achieve greater results on such diverse and complex region we must strengthen our collaboration both at regional and sub-regional levels.
Only through joint efforts our countries could turn our region into a zone of peace, cooperation and development.

In the recent years Central Asian sub-region has been undergoing rapid transformation marked by significant expansion of regional cooperation in various fields.

To coordinate development efforts in our sub-region we intend to institutionalize the UN-led regional SDGs Center for Central Asia in our former capital – Almaty city. In this regard, we are grateful that Almaty was chosen as a location of the UN ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia.

Before closing, let me express once more my sincere gratitude to the UN ESCAP Secretariat for its constant support in strengthening the fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation among the distinguished nations of Asia and the Pacific.

In conclusion, I wish all participants and UN ESCAP Secretariat very successful 77th session of the Commission.

Thank you.