Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to address you at the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Second World Assembly on Ageing and the Madrid International Plan of Action.

This important milestone falls at a time where the world must urgently take stock of the rights of older persons in society and the realities of an ageing population.

People are living longer lives. In 2021, there were 753 million people aged 65 years or over globally. And the share of older persons in the global population is growing rapidly. By 2050, one in six people will be aged 65 years or older.

But we have not yet succeeded in “building a society for all ages.” The inordinate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world’s older persons is a tragic testament.

We need renewed momentum and swift action to advance the international ageing agenda. Implementing the Madrid Plan of Action will require forward-thinking, rights-based and gender-sensitive policies. We also need to pursue new opportunities.

A strengthened response at the regional level is essential to drive global action forward. This is why the regional review and appraisal process that you initiated is crucial. This region knows what an ageing society looks like. One in three of persons over 65 live in Eastern and South Eastern Asia alone. By 2050, some 572 million older persons will live in that part of the region, more than doubling in number from today.
Highlighting the progress and gaps in implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action at the regional level can help identify and illustrate effective policies and practices, and demonstrate how the Plan of Action can contribute to delivering the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, regional and international levels.

I invite you all to seize this moment, reinforce your collective efforts and engage diverse stakeholders, including older persons, in these policy dialogues. I invite you to think across all the interlinkages between ageing and our most pressing global challenges, including climate change, conflict and social and economic security. And as digitalization continues to accelerate pace, I encourage you to tap the comparative advantages of the region to put forward ideas on how to harness digital technologies to promote socioeconomic changes that empower older persons and better integrate them in the mainstream of development.

I wish you all an inspiring meeting and I look forward to hearing your plans and ideas on the way ahead in the Global Review to be held at the Commission for Social Development in 2023.

I look forward to welcoming you to New York.

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