Honorable delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Good morning!

It is great pleasure to represent the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on this important forum. I would like to express my gratitude to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and women empowerment (UN-Women) for convening and hosting this important conference to assess the progress made and future actions to address barriers to gender Equality and to achieve the Sustainable development Goals by 2030.

On behalf of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan I would like to inform you that, my country has made significant achievements to let women have equal opportunities with their male counterparts.

Afghanistan is among leading countries in acceding to 7 out of 9 international human rights treaties including Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, and third country in Asia and the Pacific region that formulated National Action Plan for implementation of United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325.

Afghanistan has taken serious measures to nationalize the Sustainable Development Goals through consultations with various stakeholders including civil society. In 2018 we have aligned the goals with our national policies and strategies and started its implementation from 2019 to 2030.

The key achievements are as followings;

Article 22 of the constitution of Afghanistan lays down the principle of equality before the law. It denounce inequality or discrimination on the basis of gender and religious affiliation. Afghanistan is enacted numerous laws, regulation and policies in the last 5 years. More than 470 laws has been enacted in conformity with human rights standards. Enactment of the Elimination of Violence Against Women law (EVAW), the Anti-harassment law against Women and children and National Action Plan for Prevention of Early and Child Marriages are the significant legal steps taken by the Government to fight violence against women. Besides having a high commission on EVAW, provincial commissions are established in 34 provinces of Afghanistan. A deputy position in
Attorney General Office, 32 provincial EVAW attorney offices, 28 EVAW special courts, Family Response Units in all police offices, and 27 women protection centers in 20 provinces are the major mechanisms established for the implementation of the mentioned laws.

Furthermore, various policies, strategies and action plans have been formulated in compliance with Sustainable Development Goals, particularly goal 5. Ministry of Women Affairs, as the main agency for women empowerment has developed 28 policies for the purpose of women empowerment. The policies on access of women to property, protection of women in emergency situations and women and Elections are among 8 approved policies and strategies.

After accession in CEDAW, a ten years National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan was approved, implemented and evaluated. Currently, the Ministry of Women Affairs has the lead to prepare the second National Plan for Women Empowerment in Afghanistan with a specific focus on inclusion of 12 areas of concerns adopted in Beijing Declaration. In addition, within the Afghanistan National Development Framework, out of 10 National Priority Programs approved in the last 5 years, one of them is specific on Women’s Economic Empowerment.

According to the constitution and various laws and frameworks, the Afghanistan Government has provided specific quotas for women’s inclusion in politics and decision making positions. Currently 27% of all member of parliaments are women. We have two women ministers 16 deputy ministers, and five women ambassadors in the diplomatic missions. Women make 27.3% of the civil servants and more than 11% of them are in decision making positions.

Followings are some recommendations to address some major challenges;

While the achievements are encouraging, given the context of Afghanistan and the current status of the peace process, they are fragile. Ultra conservative society of Afghanistan along with low level of education pose a great obstacle for social acceptance of human rights particularly in remote areas. Therefore realization of human rights and women rights require more reliable support system, time and resources. Women machineries and mechanisms established with the mandate for gender equality and women’s right need further support to be more resilient in longer run.

Severe drought and civil conflict have damaged the agriculture industry in the last decade which makes 44% of the overall economics of the country. Majority of women in rural areas are engaged
in this sector, mostly as unpaid workers. Hence, more focus and resources are required to address women’s economic empowerment and strengthen women’s role in agricultural value chain.

Afghanistan is victim of climate change which caused severe drought and displacement of people. Our country is silent victim of manmade and natural disasters and need urgent technical and financial support in both areas. It is a country suffering from the impact of the climate change. While the country has not contributed to the current climate emergency situation, turning the agricultural lands to wasteland has placed immense impact on the lives of rural people, particularly women. Therefore, it is a call for support to enhance women’s resilience to climate change and their participation in decision making through education and adaptation.

Thank you!