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**Senior Officials Segment  
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Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Introduction**

Welcome to the sixty-ninth session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

There is a Japanese proverb which says that “the bamboo which bends is stronger than the oak that resists”. It is an observation about the power of resilience, which is also the subject of our Theme Study for the Commission this year.

Building social, economic, and environmental resilience is key to creating a more inclusive and sustainable Asia-Pacific region – which is both the focus of our work, and the inspiration for our efforts.

This session of the Commission is our first since the Rio+20 conference on sustainable development last year, when world leaders began, in earnest, global discussions about the shape of the post-2015 development agenda.

One of the most significant aspects of the Rio+20 outcome document was its recognition of the importance of regionalism, and the valuable role to be played by organisations such as the United Nations Regional Commissions.

Our shared challenge therefore, in the week ahead, is to use this intergovernmental platform of the Commission to decide what this means for Asia and the Pacific. This is our opportunity to agree on the outlines of a framework for inclusive and sustainable development, which will drive our regional efforts, and strengthen the Asia-Pacific voice in global negotiations.

To succeed in building the future we want, we must first remove the roadblocks to development which have already begun to slow the progress of ‘Rising Asia’.

We must reduce inequalities and disparities which have resulted from our rapid economic growth. We must address the destruction of our environment and choose more planet-friendly development paths. And we must ensure equality of opportunity, for every child, every youth, every woman, and every man, across our region.

*Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,*

### **Unprecedented Decisions for the 69<sup>th</sup> Session**

I would like to begin this Senior Officials Segment of the Commission by acknowledging the energy and expertise already invested by our member States in the 69<sup>th</sup> session.

I am especially pleased that so many member States have chosen to sponsor and co-sponsor resolutions this year. There are, in fact, an unprecedented 17 proposed resolutions, and at least 14 draft decisions, before us – a clear indication that the countries of Asia and the Pacific have converted the ESCAP intergovernmental platform, into the most inclusive decision-making table for our region.

Amongst the slate of pressing and timely issues which have been brought for decision to the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission, are resolutions which directly address sustainable development and resilience; resolutions empowering regional connectivity and growth; improving support for countries with special needs; as well as building regional capacity and social equity.

The importance and urgency of these issues, show once again that the Commission is the 'come-to-place' for regional decisions and collective action, on shared challenges and opportunities.

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### **Resolutions for Sustainable Development & Resilience**

There are five draft resolutions on the agenda of the session, which place inclusive and sustainable development at the heart of our discussions. The first welcomes the convening later this year, by Thailand, of a ministerial-level dialogue. The high-level meeting will take up the work we begin this week – on the need for dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region about how to make progress on the outcomes of Rio+20, accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the shape of the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015.

The second proposed resolution focuses on enhancing regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters, emphasizing the need for a collective approach to multi-sectoral capacity building, and strengthening ESCAP's mandate to further integrate disaster risk considerations into the emerging regional development framework. In doing so, it builds on the findings of the Theme Study for this session.

The vital role of water in sustainable development is the focus of a third draft resolution, addressing the links between our regional water resources and key global challenges – urging a more integrated management approach. Issues of water scarcity and the links between water, food, energy and human security, are rapidly becoming key regional concerns, especially in central Asia. It is also very timely, in light of the fact that 2013 is the United Nations International Year of Water Cooperation.

Rounding out the list of important resolutions on sustainable development and resilience are those promoting inter-regional action, and a resolution to implement a five-year Asia-Pacific plan of action improving capacities of member States to apply space technology and geographic information systems (GIS) for disaster risk reduction and sustainable development.

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## **Resolutions for Regional Connectivity & Growth**

Another key development last year was the consensus by member States on an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports. The formalization of a regional network of dry ports, together with the existing Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, will further advance progress towards a fully integrated intermodal transport and logistics system.

Successful dry ports will also help us to build regional corridors of prosperity. We must link our more prosperous coastal areas to less developed landlocked economies.

With the adoption of the resolution before you this week, the intergovernmental agreement on dry ports will be opened for signature at the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport, in November. We look forward to your support for the resolution, and to your signature of the agreement later this year.

Another resolution being proposed to promote regional connectivity and growth focuses on Information and Communications Technology (ICT), to build knowledge-networked societies. Rio+20 urged governments to improve access to 'frontier technologies', especially broadband internet, and the third session of our ESCAP Committee on ICT agreed to present this resolution for your consideration.

One of the key issues for development, whether in ICT, transport, or any other aspect of connectivity infrastructure, is financing. Last year, the Islamic Republic of Iran generously hosted the Third Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for Infrastructure Development. The subsequent Tehran Declaration was adopted by a record number of Asia-Pacific ministers and leaders. The adoption of the resolution highlighting the importance of PPP financing for vital infrastructure, will support our regional connectivity agenda.

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## **Resolutions Supporting Countries with Special Needs**

The regional focus of the Commission, on countries with special needs, takes account of the fact that many have different initial conditions, resource bases, and priority challenges to their development. It also acknowledges, however, that these countries have unique strengths and supports their strategic importance to building a more inclusive and sustainable region.

In addition to the meeting later today, of the Special Body on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), there are also important resolutions before us, including the one being proposed on implementation of the Programme of Action for the LLDCs. This is complemented by a resolution on achieving the MDGs in the region and the Bangkok declaration of the Asia-Pacific LDCs, LLDCs, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) on the post-2015 development agenda.

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## **Resolutions Building Regional Capacity & Social Equity**

The Commission will also be considering two resolutions generated by the work of the third session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics. The first calls on member States to strengthen capacities and coordination to improve civil registration and vital statistics

(CRVS), proposing the establishment of a regional knowledge-sharing platform, and a regional training network. CRVS is so much more than a counting exercise – it is the basis for policy planning, the provision of essential services, and ensuring the rights of all our people.

The second resolution on statistics links directly to the goal of the Committee to ensure that, by 2020, all countries will have the capacity to produce and share a basic range of *population and social* statistics.

Your support for these measures will be another vital building block for a more inclusive and sustainable Asia-Pacific, as will the adoption of the resolutions being proposed on implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on the Asia-Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, and on implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging.

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## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the most remarkable feature of the agenda before us is not the volume of resolutions and decisions, but rather their scope, substance, and potential impact on the countries and people of Asia and the Pacific, through the vehicle of the Commission.

ESCAP has made great strides in rigorous research and analysis, the generation of policy dialogues and policy options, the sharing of innovative approaches and best-practice experiences, as well as the provision of technical assistance to our member States.

This session of the Commission will therefore also consider a resolution reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of the conference structure, and proposing a number of concrete measures to improve our ability to provide action and results-oriented services to the people of this region.

As the regional arm of the United Nations, ESCAP is your platform, the Commission is your UN regional assembly, and we are here to support you.

I look forward to your recommendations from this Senior Officials segment to the Ministerial session next week.

Let's work together for an inclusive, resilient and sustainable future for Asia and the Pacific - where we grow together and share collective prosperity.

I thank you.