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**Country Statement by H.E. Chua Siew San, Ambassador of the Republic  
of Singapore to the Kingdom of Thailand, at the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the  
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok,  
7 – 8 August 2014**

Theme: “Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity”

[Mr Chairman]

Your Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

The Singapore delegation would like to express our appreciation to the United Nations ESCAP for organising the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the ESCAP Commission, and to the Government of Thailand for their warm hospitality.

Mr Chairman,

2 Singapore strongly believes that enhanced connectivity betters the lives of our region’s people. This is most apparent in the economic field, where closer cooperation, especially within ASEAN, has boosted growth and development. Regional measures such as the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement and the Trade in Goods Agreement have helped global foreign direct investment into ASEAN nations rise to an all-time high of US\$116 billion last year.

3 As a founding member of APEC and ASEAN, Singapore supports improving regional connectivity by strengthening economic linkages. At APEC’s Bali Summit last year, Singapore Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong emphasised this point, urging members to make progress in establishing a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific. In addition, APEC formulated a Framework on Connectivity to enhance physical, institutional and people-to-people links in the region. In ASEAN, Singapore works with fellow members to establish **the ASEAN Economic Community**, a single market production base, by 2015. 99% of goods within ASEAN is now tariff free. However, regional financial integration has room to grow. We thank ESCAP for its support in developing ASEAN’s Regional Connectivity Master Plan, and encourage ESCAP to continue collaboration with APEC and ASEAN to remove remaining obstacles to trade and investment.

4           Let me now highlight two challenges. First, infrastructural connectivity must deepen. This will support intra-regional commerce and generate multiple positive effects. For example, the East-West Corridor Project in the Greater Mekong Sub-region has helped motorcycle industries reduce equipment transport time from 2 days to 30 minutes. The growth of marketplaces and special economic zones along the Corridor has generated incomes and even increased access to health services. The upcoming Kunming to Singapore railway network will extend this connectivity beyond ASEAN. However, there is still a long way to go in infrastructural quality and coverage. The Asian Development Bank estimates that the region must dedicate USD\$66 billion per year to infrastructure development for the next decade, yet regional investment is less than 2% GDP. We encourage ESCAP to explore public-private partnerships to finance infrastructural development, particularly for countries that face funding gaps. We note that ESCAP's Northeast Sub-Regional Office helped to oversee a legal agreement this year on the transit of goods along the China-Mongolia-Russia corridor. We encourage ESCAP to pursue similar initiatives with other sub-regional offices.

5           Given the size and diversity of the Asia-Pacific, a second challenge is to ensure that the benefits of enhanced connectivity are shared by all. To quote Rio+20, the "future we want," means different things to different States. We thank ESCAP for organising the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, which gathered the concerns of diverse sub-groups such as the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Singapore shares many interests with other SIDS, including vulnerability to climate change and resource scarcities. We believe in sharing our experience and know-how with others in the region. In this regard, we have a partnership with ESCAP since 1997 under the **Singapore Cooperation Programme** which has provided training for 133 participants from 29 Asia-Pacific countries. We welcome future collaborations with ESCAP to provide technical assistance.

6           Let me conclude by noting that ESCAP's membership is a diverse collection of nations at various stages of development. Our diversity should enable us to benefit from one another's strengths and build a network of value-adding activities to draw upon our comparative advantages. ESCAP is a valuable partner in promoting intra-regional collaboration to advance our common goals. Singapore will continue to participate constructively in discussions and to seek opportunities with ESCAP and its member countries to foster a more connected region.

Thank you.