

Brunei (7)

70th Session of UNESCAP Commission (Phase II)

Country Statement: Brunei Darussalam

Bismillah Hir Rahman Nir Rahim.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and a very good afternoon.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Brunei Darussalam's delegation would like to express our sincere appreciation to ESCAP for the excellent arrangement of the 70th session and congratulate His Excellency Mr. Tshering Tobgay, the Prime Minister of Bhutan for being elected as the chairman and also to Madam Dr. Shamshad Akhtar for her appointment as Executive Secretary.

Mr. Chairman,

As mentioned by some delegates yesterday, the deadline to achieve the MDGs is next year. We would like to share that Brunei Darussalam is moving towards achieving MDGs targets: our health indicators are consistent with those of the developed nations; Educational opportunities are available for all at all levels; Brunei Darussalam has also managed to safeguard its environment and natural resources in line with the ideals of sustainable development; In the international arena, Brunei Darussalam continues to be a part of the global partnership for development and supports technical cooperation for the benefit of LDCs.

We are also striving to realize our National Vision 2035 goals (*Wawasan Brunei 2035*) - which aims to have an educated, highly-skilled and accomplished people; with high quality of life; and a dynamic and sustainable economy.

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Brunei Darussalam, as with other countries, faces universal challenges in its development agenda whereby Brunei Darussalam needs to ensure continuous development in areas such as human capital, in its economic and business environment, in protecting and empowering the vulnerable, in containing contagious disease, in ensuring food security and in safeguarding the environment. Sustainable development, thus, remains as the nation's top priority in our national development policies and strategies.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome this year's theme on "Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity". We recognize that economic development are driven by international trade, foreign direct investments and the emergence of regional and global production networks that are facilitated by the increasingly borderless world.

Such developments have made the role of connectivity more important as it continues to shape social and economic developments of the future. Connectivity is evolving and is becoming multifacet, as the connectivity of one sector is influenced by the connectivity of others.

Despite the growing importance of connectivity to drive economic progress, the region's prosperity has not been shared equally, with rising income inequality both within and across countries. Against this backdrop, we can therefore see the value in fostering/factoring the region's connectivity into our national and regional development strategies.

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished delegates,

We in Brunei Darussalam continue to promote and enhance connectivity in many aspects within and across our borders.

In terms of trade and transport, we are in the process of improving our maritime and air connectivities. For maritime, we are in the process of enhancing our port capacity in order to increase the volume of container cargo as well as to accommodate larger container ships.

We are also transforming an island at Brunei Bay into an international port centre for logistics, manufacturing and processing and other commercial activities.

For air connectivity, the Brunei International Airport is currently undergoing a modernization project, which aims to develop Brunei Darussalam into a competitive air logistics hub in the region; and to increase flight frequencies and passenger traffic. This in turn will contribute to the vibrant growth of sectors such as tourism, trade and investments. It will also double the airport's handling capacity from the current 1.5 million passengers to 3 million passengers annually by this year.

Mr. Chairman,

We are also improving our connectivity with our neighbours on land. One of our just recently completed project is the *Pandaruan* Bridge, or the "Friendship Bridge" that links Brunei Darussalam with East Malaysia. This has widened opportunities for developing the economy, business and tourism between both countries. Furthermore, it also

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increases people-to-people connectivity through greater ease of access across the border.

On the same note, as we observe people-to-people connectivity, we are also raising the level of awareness on issues of human trafficking. We are currently implementing a national action plan to combat trafficking in persons.

At a sub-regional level, under the umbrella of the Brunei Indonesia Malaysia Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) Cooperation, we have also placed connectivity as one of our strategic pillars. Here, we have identified twelve priority infrastructure projects, and these are expected to complement the activities of the larger regional grouping of ASEAN.

We also participate in the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund (AIF) to finance projects that promote infrastructure development in particular project within the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC).

Mr. Chairman,

In the area of Information Communication Technology (ICT) within the country, we are enhancing our ICT connectivity through several projects to improve ICT infrastructure, particularly on availability and accessibility. Brunei Darussalam's Internet penetration rate is currently at 60.3 percent and showing an increasing trend annually (as recorded in the 2014 Global Information Technology Report).

Under the ICT Rural Outreach Programme (iROP), we aim to bridge the digital divide between the rural and urban areas of the country in the next few years.

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Regionally, Brunei Darussalam welcomes the ASEAN ICT Masterplan 2015 that similarly aims to bridge the digital divide. We believe that ICT is a powerful enabler in fostering integration, connectivity and innovation within the region.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished delegates,

We believe the efforts made to strengthen our connectivity at both national and regional level are valuable steps in augmenting inclusive growth and sustainable development. In doing these, we face similar challenges that have been outlined and discussed at length in the Commission's report, such as the need for stronger institutional coordination within and between Governments, and across sectors. Therefore, we call for more efforts to enhance physical and institutional connectivity; more regular exchanges of best practices and greater diffusion of knowledge on connectivity in the Asia Pacific region.

Finally, we laud the unwavering commitment of the Commission in promoting *regional* connectivity, integration and sustainable development. We sincerely hope, with our joint efforts and cooperation, the people of the Asia Pacific region will be able to enjoy a "shared prosperity" in "the future we want."

Thank you for your kind attention.