

**Inaugural Address
by
His Excellency Mr. Manasvi Srisodapol
Deputy Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the 70th session of the Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific, Thursday 7 August 2014, 09.00 hrs.
ESCAP Hall, United Nations Conference Centre,
Bangkok**

**Madam Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government and her people, I wish to extend a warm welcome to all distinguished delegates and participants to the 70th session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

The theme of this year's session of **“Regional connectivity for shared prosperity”** is both timely and appropriate.

It is timely because we have started the road towards the post 2015 development agenda and regional connectivity will be a critical factor as means of implementation for achieving growth and development.

It is appropriate because only through regional connectivity can wealth and development be spread from region to region, and this is why the work of ESCAP is so vital to member states in the Asia-Pacific region.

In May this year, the first phase of the ESCAP Commission was held right after the successful conclusion of the inaugural Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) in Pattaya, Chonburi Province. The APFSD identified several overarching regional priorities for the post-2015 development agenda. Deepening regional integration and connectivity, among other critical issues, was recognized as a regional priority. Weak connectivity, both in terms of hardware and software, has resulted in uneven distribution of the region's growing wealth and prosperity.

For the Asia and the Pacific region, many countries, especially, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing countries are those who have yet to fully benefit from the opportunities arising from enhanced connectivity. It is vital for us who live in such a diverse continent to explore how these countries with special needs are connected to the rest and receive commensurate share of the region's growing prosperity and wealth.

No country should be left behind.

I am pleased to note that ESCAP has always promoted connectivity, having initiated the Asian Highway and Trans Asian Railway from the very beginning. When I was a junior officer, I used to come to ESCAP to research documents on the Asian Highway and Trans Asian Railway. ESCAP's work on connectivity dated that far back.

With such achievement, Member States should continue to support ESCAP's initiatives in strengthening regional connectivity. As presented in the Note by the Secretariat titled "Regional connectivity for shared prosperity", the proposed set of strategies reflect multifaceted nature of regional connectivity with an aim to enhancing regional connectivity in four critical areas: trade and transport; information and communication technology; energy; and people-to-people connectivity. As home to ESCAP, Thailand will continue to work closely with ESCAP to promote its initiatives in the four areas of regional connectivity.

Excellencies,

I wish to highlight some key points, which are important to our aspiration to promote regional connectivity for shared prosperity.

First, we need to **effectively mobilize resources** to enhance our regional connectivity. We should concentrate on viable projects and consider innovative means to tap into huge financial resources already available in the region. Public-private partnership could also be promoted to reduce the financial burden of Government.

Second, we need to **enhance capacity** related to the software side of connectivity. We should work together to improve institutional connectivity and cross-cutting issues, including trade repository, standards and conformity assessment capability, border management, and labour mobility.

Third, the Asia-Pacific connectivity could be **built upon the dynamic regional institutional frameworks**. It is crucial to ensure that our efforts to promote connectivity in different regional and sub-regional

frameworks such as ASEAN, ACD, BIMSTEC, APEC, SAARC, ACMECS, and ESCAP are coherent and compliment to one another.

I am confident that under Madame Executive Secretary's fresh visions and leadership, ESCAP will continue to serve as regional inclusive platform to enhance regional connectivity for shared prosperity and will continue to innovate ways and means to address new challenges facing the region. Thailand remains committed as ever to work closely with the ESCAP.

I am also confident that this Commission session will be, as always, fruitful and productive. I wish you the best success in your deliberations.

I hereby declare open the 70th session of the Commission.

Thank you very much and Sawasdee Krub.
