

70<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION  
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC  
PHASE II: 4-8<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2014, BANGKOK

KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE LYONCHHEN TSHERING TOBGAY,  
HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER OF BHUTAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE 70<sup>TH</sup>  
COMMISSION SESSION

H.E. Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao, Prime Minister of Timor-Leste and  
Chair of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission,

H.E. Lord Tu'ivankano, Prime Minister of Tonga,

H.E. Mr. Manasvi Srisodapol, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of  
Foreign Affairs of Thailand,

Madam Shamshad Akhtar, Under Secretary General of the United  
Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP,

Hon'ble Ministers,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have the honour to convey to the Commission the warm greetings of  
His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck of Bhutan, as  
well as his best wishes for the success of the 70<sup>th</sup> Commission  
Session of ESCAP. I wish to express my deep appreciation for the  
warm reception that has been accorded to my delegation and I. May I  
at the outset congratulate Madam Shamshad Akhtar on her  
appointment as the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. She brings to her  
post the weight of a long international development experience and  
driven dedication to work. I would also like to pay tribute to the

outgoing Executive Secretary Dr. Noeleen Heyzer for her sterling leadership of the ESCAP Secretariat.

2. I am honoured to be invited to chair the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission of ESCAP, following in the footsteps of my illustrious predecessor, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Timor-Leste. ESCAP is the most comprehensive regional body of the United Nations system, which is home to two thirds of humanity. ESCAP, in its seventh decade of existence, continues to utilize its convening power to address through collective action some of the most daunting challenges to achieving sustainable development. What is particularly noteworthy is that true to the Secretary General's commitment to leave no one behind and a life of dignity for all, the regional body provides a platform for greater participation to the weaker and often unheard voices of the region, the least developed countries, the small island developing states and landlocked developing states in Asia and the Pacific.

Excellencies,

3. We meet at a pivotal moment when the convergence of key intergovernmental processes compels us to re-examine and redefine the very notions of development and progress.
  - a. The Millennium Development Goals have for the past 14 years, provided the international community with a common vision and contributed to achievement of remarkable progress. As we approach the target date in 2015, a little more than one year away, we have focused our resolve, and

renewed our commitment to intensify all efforts to accelerate progress across all goals, and in particular, to target those most off track, those where progress has stalled.

b. With the adoption of the outcome document of Rio+20, The Future We Want, we have charted out a path in pursuit of an inclusive and people centered post 2015 development agenda. The vision for a single framework, is to be built upon the foundations of the Millennium Development Goals, centred on poverty eradication and sustainable development, universal in nature, and applicable to all, while permitting space for differing national circumstances and national policies and priorities. The 17 goals and 169 targets advanced in the proposal of the General Assembly's Open Working Group presents a comprehensive framework for sustainable development that will serve as a precursor to discussions on the Post 2015 Development Agenda. Together, these will shape discussions culminating in the adoption in September 2015 at the Summit level, of a new development paradigm, that will redefine the parameters for global partnerships and collaborations.

c. Of equal importance to our region, discussions on a new legally binding, universally applicable, agreement on climate change are underway. The 2014 Human Development Report, released in July this year, describes climate change as one of the most critical challenges to the global development agenda that could become the single biggest

impediment to sustainable development. The success of negotiations leading to the adoption of a strong instrument at COP 21 in Paris is therefore of paramount importance to our region.

Excellencies,

4. Both in themselves, and collectively, the convergence of these three events have the potential to transform the growth trajectories of our economies, the security of our societies, indeed, the happiness of our peoples. The contours of this new landscape are beginning to take shape. The aspirations, challenges and concerns of the Asia Pacific region must help to define that landscape. ESCAP must play a stronger leadership role in shaping the global agenda.
5. I am pleased to note the Region's perspectives, which point to the centrality of sustainable development in the post 2015 development agenda. There is recognition of the importance of the means of implementation, and the imperative for accountability and monitoring. In this regard, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP deserves our deep appreciation in making the Commission and its inter-governmental machinery an effective platform for discussing and building consensus on key priority areas of the region. The Secretariat's initiative to sharpen the strategic priorities of ESCAP, as well as the inauguration of the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, and launch of the Asia Pacific Outreach Meeting for Sustainable Financing, are particularly notable.

Excellencies,

6. Now turning to the ground realities of the region, Asia-Pacific countries have demonstrated their deep commitment to realize the Millennium Development Goals. Today, the region has been celebrated by the world community for its success in reducing income poverty (\$1.25 PPP) from some 1.6 billion in 1990 to some 743 million in latest count. Inequality has risen with disparities both across as well as within countries posing a serious challenge. Maternal mortality and child malnutrition remain at unacceptably high levels. Environmental degradation in many instances has reached alarming heights. Large swaths of population still remain outside formal service delivery systems with many millions not having access to sanitation and safe drinking water. Urban-rural divide poses a big challenge for almost countries. As a result, the MDGs for us remain an unfinished agenda and we must strive together to accelerate our progress towards achieving the remaining goals and targets.
7. Asia-Pacific region has made significant progress in achieving high rates of economic growth and structural change, despite an external environment that has been less conducive than few years back. The region went through shock waves as food-fuel crisis hit us in 2007 and 2008, then quickly followed by the global financial shock which turned into a generalized economic downturn. As the global recovery remains tentative, our task in sustaining inclusive growth has become equally challenging. Most of the countries in the region are fast becoming middle-income countries, and many of them will have sizable domestic markets to sustain their growth and development but the weaker countries, particularly the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small islands developing States

will continue to depend on external demand, easy and unfettered access to developed country markets, technology and financial flows to sustain their growth and structural change.

8. The region has also done well in reducing income poverty and other social development indicators. Our achievements in other areas such as reducing hunger, eliminating gender discrimination in schooling, reducing maternal and child mortality, providing safe drinking water has been notable. But that achievement has been uneven, and in several cases, reversals have taken place. Again, the weaker countries such as the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS as a whole have a long way to go and remain particularly vulnerable to external and internal shocks, especially their exposure to climate change shocks are taking a huge toll on their hard earned achievements. As we gather here today in Bangkok, we must remind ourselves that an equitable pattern of growth and development is our cherished objective whereby all countries of the region, such as rich and poor, developed and developing, low income and high income benefit from the regional growth processes.
9. The theme of this Commission Session is "Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity". For a region whose geographic expanse and variety is only matched by the complexity of challenges it faces, it is a timely subject that deserves serious reflection and time-bound action. It would be an understatement to assert that connectivity in all its manifestations will be a key determinant for realistically achieving inclusive and sustainable development in the region. Given the vast geographic characteristics, challenges in cross-border mobility and the profound inter-sectoral nature of connectivity there is an urgent

need for a paradigm-shifting integrated approach toward regional connectivity for attaining a future of shared prosperity. Such an integrated approach would need to encompass exploiting complementarities in networks in areas such as trade and transport, ICT, energy, people to people contacts and promotion of knowledge based economies. This assumes a greater urgency in view of the emerging regional and global challenges. In this regard, the document placed before us by the Secretariat on this subject provides us a useful basis to agree on a road map to strengthen regional connectivity. I remain confident that an abundant political will amongst ourselves will drive these good intentions and proposals forwarded to bear tangible results.

10. In concluding, I wish to commend the Executive Secretary and her efficient team for the meticulous arrangements, excellent and timely documents that greatly facilitated the work of this Commission Session. I want to place on record our collective appreciation for the constant endeavour of the ESCAP Secretariat and its regional centers to realize the hopes and aspirations of over 4 billion people of the Asia-Pacific Region for a brighter, more sustainable and a happier future.

Tashi Delek.

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