

Statement H.E. Ambassador Sonam T Rabgye, Officiating Foreign Secretary and Representative of the Prime Minister of Bhutan, 71st Session of the ESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand

Hon'ble Chair H.E. Prime Minister of Fiji,

Hon'ble Presidents and Prime Ministers of Asia Pacific

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is an honor for me to participate in this august gathering. I bring warm greetings and best wishes of my Prime Minister H.E. Lyonchhen Tshering Tobgay for the success of the 71<sup>st</sup> Session of the ESCAP. My PM deeply regrets for not being able to be with us today since he is required to be in Thimphu, for the ongoing Parliament session. I have the honor to convey his best wishes for the success of the 71<sup>st</sup> Commission Session under the able stewardship of

H.E. Mr. Josia Voreque Bainimarama, the Prime Minister of Fiji.

2. I would like to join my fellow delegates in expressing our deepest sympathy and condolences to the people of Nepal for the devastating earthquake last month, which resulted in tragic loss of lives and wide scale destruction to properties including priceless cultural heritage sites. Standing in solidarity with Nepal, Bhutan responded immediately – two days after the earthquake – with a compact independent medical & rescue team who worked in close cooperation with the Nepalese authorities in Trishuli. The Asia Pacific region, being a highly disaster prone region, needs to build resilience against all forms of disasters and build robust disaster preparedness and response measures nationally and regionally.

3. Under the able stewardship of the Executive Secretary, ESCAP continues to forge consensus building, providing strategic analysis, policy options and cooperation for sustainable development in Asia and Pacific. Under ESCAP the region has seen notable progress, particularly in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment, statistics, social development, disaster management, ICT, transport & connectivity among others.

4. The Executive Secretary and the Secretariat has spearheaded the reform of the Commission and diligently conducted the conference structure review. I thank the Executive Secretary for her report and would like to commend the recommendations contained therein. Making the UN Systems "Fit for Purpose" in delivering on the implementation of SDGs is important as we embark upon embracing the new

challenges of development and look towards new horizons for peace, prosperity and security in the world.

5. Bhutan has benefited from the technical expertise and knowledge of ESCAP in our capacity building efforts through trainings, workshops, meetings of experts, and technical & policy advice. We thank ESCAP Secretariat for the continued support and goodwill towards Bhutan and look forward to further intensifying our cooperation. Needless to say, we also continue to look forward to close cooperation and support from all our friends in the Asia Pacific.

Mr. Chairman,

6. Last year we deliberated on Regional connectivity and shared prosperity. Although many notable initiatives and collaboration have taken place since

then, given the geographical vastness of the region and complex socio-political environment, connectivity for shared prosperity still remains a challenge. For instance South Asia sub - region still remains the least connected and least integrated region of Asia Pacific and connectivity within and between sub regions is still far behind compared to other regions. Therefore, regional connectivity remains an unfinished business, and must find a pertinent place in the implementation of SDGs for shared prosperity in the region.

7. Globally, the past three decades has witnessed achievements in alleviating poverty and destitution. Our region has succeeded in eliminating half of the world's absolute poverty. However, in spite of such progress, a large chunk of the world's poor reside in our region. Increasing inequality between and within countries also continue to pose challenges as benefits from economic growth are distributed unevenly.

Further more, we also need to look at not only income poverty but at multi-dimensional poverty, which takes into account quality of life and well - being.

Mr. Chairman,

8. The Year 2015 will see parallel movements in deciding new approaches to a better way of life such as financing for development, which is crucial for achieving SDGs and international climate change agreement. Meanwhile, we have already agreed on the Sendai Framework of cooperation for disaster risk reduction. It is therefore timely that ESCAP has chosen the theme of our session as “Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: from integration to implementation”. All three dimensions must be equally strong and integrated into a single unit to take us forward. While individually each dimension has to be strengthened, it is equally

important to create strong linkages between each of them through a mutually reinforcing system.

9. In Bhutan, guided by the philosophy of GNH, Sustainable Development has always been a cornerstone of our development and public policies. Our Five Year development plans since the 1960s have always been geared towards achieving equitable and balanced economic growth with minimum adverse impacts on natural environments and socio-cultural values. Our current development plan focuses on self-reliance and inclusive green socio-economic development. Further, the cross cutting issues like environmental conservation, climate change, gender equality, and disaster management have been mainstreamed in the plan.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

10. The last two years has seen wide ranging consultations and deliberations in the UN system on the Post 2015 development goals and aspirations, which will culminate in the adoption of the SDGs later this year. Economic progress, social cohesion and environmental conservation are all means to achieving the happiness and well being, which are the very essence of life. The three dimensions of the SDGs, should therefore lead us towards the ultimate goal of happiness at the individual, national and global levels.

11. In conclusion, my delegation would like to thank the Executive Secretary and her able staff for the excellent arrangements and excellent documents for the meeting. I wish the 71st Session of the Commission a successful outcome.

Thank you and Tashi Delek.