

(Translation)

**Remarks by Assistant Foreign Minister Qian Hongshan
At the 71st Session of the United Nations
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

28 May 2015

Mr. Chair,
Madam Executive Secretary,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of the Chinese government, I wish to extend warm congratulations on the opening of the 71st Session of ESCAP and express appreciation to the Thai government and ESCAP Secretariat for their thoughtful arrangements for this session.

As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations this year, one important task for the international community is to formulate the post-2015 development agenda. In this context, this session, focusing on sustainable development, is highly relevant.

Seven decades ago in 1945, the United Nations was founded in the wake of the great victory of the world anti-Fascist war. Countries in the Asia-Pacific, having made huge sacrifice in the war, embarked on a path for national independence and prosperity. Starting from post-war reconstruction, Asia-Pacific countries have actively explored development paths suited to their national conditions and after generations of hard work, have completely changed their destiny, moving from poverty and backwardness to development and revitalization, and from war-torn battlefields to the most dynamic and promising region in the world.

Twenty-three years ago in 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro adopted the Agenda 21, establishing the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities", mapping out a blueprint for sustainable development, and opening a new era for international development cooperation. Asia-Pacific countries have made parallel progress in economic development, social progress and environmental protection. They have also worked together to meet challenges relating to the ecosystem, energy, resources and climate change. Sustainable development has therefore become a well-accepted idea in the entire region.

Fifteen years ago in 2000, the United Nations formulated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which became the most comprehensive, authoritative and systematic development goals for the international community. Strictly abiding by their MDGs commitments, Asia-Pacific countries took vigorous policy measures, overcame the negative impact of the international financial crisis, and delivered good performance in the various fields, making important contributions to the global efforts to attain the MDGs.

As we speak, the world economy has entered into a period of profound adjustment, with divergent performance and policies of various economies and many uncertainties in the development environment. The Asia-Pacific, for its part, has on the whole maintained a sound momentum of growth, deepened regional integration, and became an important engine driving global growth. At the same time, developing countries in the Asia-Pacific are now in a crucial period of structural adjustment and improvement as well as shift in growth drivers. As old problems coexist with new challenges, these countries still face daunting tasks to realize strong, inclusive and sustainable development.

The Asia-Pacific has achieved a lot in its development, which also holds the key to the future of this region. This region has 60% of the world's population and immense diversity. Looking ahead, despite various challenges in realizing sustainable development, the Asia-Pacific region will remain a driving force for the global development agenda. The world is focusing on this region, hoping to learn what kind of post-2015 development agenda the Asia-Pacific countries have in mind, and in what way they plan to work with the rest of the international community to promote global development cooperation in the next 15 years. As an important participant in and contributor to global development cooperation, Asia-Pacific countries have the ability and the responsibility to make their voice heard, contribute their wisdom, and chart the course in drafting the post-2015 development agenda. Here, let me share with you the main propositions of the Chinese government.

First, we should focus on eradicating poverty and promoting development. Poverty is a scourge that affects the fundamental rights of survival and development for over one billion people across the globe. Eradicating poverty is the due responsibility of all governments, not the empty slogan of politicians. Countries should take poverty reduction as the central task and steady economic growth the driving force, increase input in social security, health care and education and improve people's

wellbeing. We need to facilitate employment and entrepreneurship, improve income distribution and promote social equity, justice, harmony and progress. This leads to balanced and sustainable development of the economy, the society and the environment, to inclusive development that really helps all people, and to long-lasting development that benefits the generations to come.

Second, we should strengthen global partnership for sustainable development and build a more comprehensive and balanced framework of global development cooperation. The principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" must be upheld, and North-South cooperation should continue to serve as the main channel. Developed countries should fulfill their pledge on official development assistance and increase financial and technical assistance to developing countries, least developed countries in particular. Moreover, South-South cooperation should be strengthened to expand the areas of cooperation and promote unity among the developing countries on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit. We should truly respect the primary responsibility of all governments for the development of their countries, respect the right of all countries to choose their development paths in light of their national conditions and development stages, and help developing countries enhance development capacity. We should continue to support the coordinating role of the United Nations, make better use of development resources and encourage all stakeholders to play a bigger role.

Third, we should foster an enabling external environment for development and provide real support to developing countries. Development is the bond connecting the destiny of all nations and individuals. It is an eternal theme and our common pursuit. We should work to build a community of shared destiny for mankind and a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation so as to enjoy common development and jointly meet the challenges. We should work to increase the voice and representation of developing countries, and make the international order more just and equitable. We should be committed to open regionalism, accelerate regional economic integration, deepen connectivity, and jointly build an open Asia-Pacific economy featuring innovative development, interconnected growth and converging interests.

Mr. Chair,

China attaches great importance to the MDGs and has incorporated the implementation of the MDGs into its national development strategy of

completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Comprehensive policy measures have been adopted in line with its national realities and remarkable progress has been achieved. China is the first developing country to meet the poverty reduction goal of the MDGs ahead of schedule, accounting for two thirds of the total population being lifted out of extreme poverty across the world. Compulsory education has been made universal and gender equality in education and employment has been basically ensured. China is working to strengthen its medical and health service system and improve the environment. As a responsible developing country, China has offered assistance to the utmost of its ability to more than 120 developing countries in their efforts to realize the MDGs under the framework of South-South cooperation. We are willing to share our experience with other countries and promote common development through inclusive cooperation and mutual learning.

In spite of its remarkable achievements and contributions to the world, China is still the world's largest developing country that suffers from serious lack of balance, coordination and sustainability in its development. The pressure on resources and the environment remains heavy, and shifting growth model and restructuring the economy continues to be an arduous task. It is based on this reality that we have moved proactively to adapt to and shape the new normal. To improve the quality and efficiency of the economy, we are working to shift from high speed to medium-high speed growth, from an extensive model oriented to scale and speed to an intensive one that values quality and efficiency, and from a focus on investment in production factors to greater emphasis on innovation. China's economic transformation and reform serves the goal of sustainable development. It will help ease the tension in the supply-demand relationship, and relieve the heavy burden on resources and the environment. It will bring the 1.3 billion Chinese people a better life, keep the mountains green and rivers clear, and ensure greater progress in sustainable development.

To help others is to help oneself. Only when countries integrate their self interests into the overall interests of the entire Asia-Pacific and embed their own development in the greater picture of common and stable development of the region can complementarity be forged, and free flow of production factors achieved for common development. Guided by this vision, the Chinese government has been committed to promoting friendship and partnership with its neighbors. Following the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness, China has been working to deepen win-win cooperation and connectivity with its neighboring countries. It is vigorously advancing the "Silk Road

Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” initiatives, preparing for the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and has launched the Silk Road Fund, all in support of development and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. These measures, which accord well with ESCAP’s aspiration to promote practical cooperation and improve people’s wellbeing, and are in keeping with the regional and international trend for cooperation, have been warmly received by the international community. Through these measures, China hopes to build a comprehensive, all-round and multi-tiered connectivity network, promote all-dimensional cooperation in industries, trade, financial sector, energy and resources, better align its development strategy with those of countries along the routes, promote diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development of the relevant countries with a view to injecting new and strong impetus into global development. China will, under the framework of South-South cooperation, further expand cooperation with other developing countries, consolidate cooperation platforms and upgrade cooperation to turn the development blueprint of each country into reality on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation.

Mr. Chair,

Over the past 60 years and more, ESCAP has withstood the trials and hardships together with its members, and evolved from a coordination mechanism for post-war reconstruction to an important intergovernmental organization for economic and social affairs in the Asia-Pacific. It has made historic contributions to the sustainable development of the region. The Chinese government applauds the reform led by Executive Secretary Ms. Shamshad Akhtar aimed at improving the standing and role of ESCAP, and supports ESCAP’s efforts to align itself with the post-2015 development agenda to promote sustainable development of the Asia-Pacific from the new starting point. Under the new circumstances, ESCAP should stay committed to both policy research and practical cooperation, take into full consideration the diversity and complementarity of the region, scale up input in capacity building and respond to the actual needs of its developing members effectively.

As a front runner in promoting connectivity, ESCAP started early, enjoys a strong influence and has accumulated a lot of experience. It has done a lot of groundwork and taken many pioneering and forward-looking actions, and its accomplishments are recognized by all. It is hoped that ESCAP will continue to tap into its strengths and potentials, further improve the top-level design of the connectivity network of the Asia-Pacific and better align and coordinate with the

development programs of its members. Relevant work could start from the easier issues before moving on to the more difficult ones and pilot projects could go first to bring about greater progress across the board. Step by step, a wide-ranging and high-level regional connectivity could be built to serve as a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the Asia-Pacific.

The Chinese side highly values the standing and role of ESCAP in regional cooperation of the Asia-Pacific, and has conducted fruitful cooperation with the organization. Over the past 20 years and more, China and ESCAP have completed nearly 200 cooperation projects, covering wide range of economic and social issues, including agriculture, disaster relief, women, poverty reduction and cross-border transport. I was informed by my colleagues that cooperation between China and ESCAP started with an agricultural irrigation project back in 1978. Now the two sides are working to apply space technology to agricultural disaster prevention and relief. As a line from a Chinese poem goes, "one seed sown in spring will produce thousands of grains in autumn". From the irrigation of seedlings years ago to the application of satellite remote sensing technology today, all these projects give vivid expression to the vitality and dynamism of China-ESCAP cooperation in promoting sustainable development. The Chinese government is ready to enhance cooperation with ESCAP, and based on the respective strengths of each side, push for progress in such key areas as infrastructure and connectivity that would have a far-reaching impact and benefit the people, and promote independent development.

Mr. Chair,

The destiny and interests of China and countries in the Asia-Pacific and beyond are now more closely interconnected than ever before. Building on what we have achieved and looking ahead to the future, we will enhance practical cooperation with other countries in connectivity, innovative development and regional economic integration so as to inject fresh impetus into the common, inclusive and sustainable development of the Asia-Pacific.

Thank you.