Australia is grateful for Thailand’s hosting of the 75th Commission, and for Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana and the ESCAP Secretariat’s continuing support to Member States.

This year’s theme of empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality captures the broad ambition of the 2030 Agenda.

Australia is committed to realising the dignity of the most marginalised members of our communities, and to leaving no one behind.

Our Foreign Policy White Paper underlines this with our commitment to promote an open, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific region in which the rights of all states are respected. Promoting and protecting the international rules-based order that supports our region’s stability and prosperity enables us to tackle these development challenges together.

The Commission’s theme study has highlighted that women, rural residents, younger people, persons with disabilities, or those above the age of 50 are the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our region.

While some progress has been made in sharing the benefits of economic growth more widely, there remains much to be done to narrow the gap and ensure that these disadvantaged groups have the same opportunities to reach their full potential.

Pacific

Australia enhancing our relations with Pacific governments and regional organisations as part of our Pacific Step Up.

We are stepping up support for regional infrastructure development because we know that well-planned, well-built and well-maintained infrastructure can boost sustainable economic growth, enhance economic integration, and deliver broader development outcomes.

To this end the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) will invest AUD$2 billion to support vital infrastructure development in the region.

Human Rights

We know that societies that protect human rights and gender equality are much more likely to be productive and stable.

Consistent with the concept of leaving no-one behind, Australia believes strongly in the universal, indivisible and inalienable nature of human rights – and these principles are integrated into our development approach.

As the first country from the Pacific to serve on the UN Human Rights Council, we are pleased to have been able to engage closely with our Pacific neighbours to promote the interests and concerns of our region.

We have brought focus on the particular barriers faced by people with disabilities in the region and the valuable work of the Pacific to increase women’s participation in public life, especially those who live in rural and remote communities. We warmly welcome Fiji in joining the Council this year, as the first ever Pacific Island member.
UN Reform

An efficient, effective and fit-for-purpose UN development system is vital for all people in our region – particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

Australia is a strong supporter of the UN Secretary-General’s wide-ranging reforms, which have the support of Member States. These changes are needed to ensure the UN is able to adapt to 21st century realities and deliver on its mandate in the future.

We are pleased to be providing a voluntary contribution of AUD$5.5 million to the reinvigorated UN Resident Coordinator system.

Australia welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the Multi-Country Office review and hope this will lead to better service delivery for small island developing states.

We look forward to engaging in the next phase of the UN’s development system reforms, focusing on regional assets and architecture, including the regional commissions.

It’s key that we have a coherent UN presence across our region, with UN agencies working together and less duplication to allow more resources for program delivery on the ground.

DRR

The Asia-Pacific is the world’s most disaster-prone region, with a person living in the region almost twice as likely to be affected by a disaster as a person living in Africa, almost six times as likely compared with Latin America and the Caribbean, and 30 times more likely than a person living in North America or Europe.

We know with climate change, increasing urbanisation and environmental degradation, these risks are expected to increase in the future.

To help strengthen our collective understanding of disaster risks, Australia is pleased to host the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR) in 2020.

Hosting the conference will provide an opportunity to share our experiences and learn from our neighbours who face similar challenges.

Working together will help us to save lives, minimise economic loss, and ensure no one is left behind during and after a disaster.

Sport

Sport can make significant contributions towards the SDGs and we have recently launched our Sports Diplomacy 2030 strategy. Sport can help encourage healthy lives, education and learning, gender equality and peaceful and inclusive societies.

Through the new Australian Sports Partnerships Program, sporting organisations will be able to partner with civil society and the private sector to find innovative ways to tackle social issues. The program will work specifically to empower women, strengthen disability inclusion and create leadership pathways.
HLPF

Australia supports the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development as the mechanism for follow-up and review of the SDGs.

We are pleased to have presented our first Voluntary National Review [on Australia’s implementation of the SDGs] to the Forum in 2018. For ESCAP Member States, these reviews are an opportunity to improve the global community’s understanding of our region’s unique circumstances.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with Member States, the Executive Secretary and the Secretariat, and to work together in ensure that our region’s propensity and opportunity is shared amongst all of our peoples.

Thank you.