Statement of the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi at the ministerial segment of 75th session of the UN ESCAP (Bangkok, 27-28 May 2018)

Dear Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Executive Secretary Ms. Armida Alisjahbana and ESCAP Secretariat for the excellent arrangements of the 75th Session.

I would also like to commend ESCAP for its able leadership in supporting governments in their efforts to implement 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and achieving its 17 Sustainable development goals (SDGs). It is especially important, as ESCAP activities cover 2/3 of the world’s population and expand over more than a half of the globe’s land mass with diverse Members States of the political and economic continuum.

The topic we are discussing at the current session - “Closing the Gap: Empowerment and Inclusion in Asia and the Pacific” has a high relevance for my country and region of Central Asia.

Kazakhstan pays a special attention to the issues of empowerment and inclusion, also reflected in the main program documents of my country and international initiatives launched by the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan - the Leader of the Nation Nursultan Nazarbayev.

At the national level, I would like to mention his recent social initiatives – In 2018 Nursultan Nazarbayev announced measures to support vulnerable population and increase welfare of our citizens. These include tax breaks for low-income workers, raising the minimal salary by 1.5 times, greater access to education, increasing expenditure on education, science and healthcare up to 10% from the GDP within 5 years, increased access to low-cost mortgages and expanded business microloans as well as increased personal access to natural gas.

Kazakhstan believes that transport connectivity, transfer of technology and economic integration projects are very helpful tools to close the gap in achieving empowerment and inclusion. It is true because a number of countries in ESCAP region lacks access to natural resources, transportation roads or high level of the disaster risk.

Kazakhstan being the largest landlocked country in the world, attaches great importance to the cooperation within a framework of the Vienna Programme of Action. Kazakhstan is focused on addressing challenges of accessibility to global markets and limited access to international trade that are among serious obstacles on our way to sustainable development.
Kazakhstan’s Nurly Zhol programme and China’s Belt and Road initiative are good examples of such cooperation. Both projects seek to create conditions for trade facilitation, transit transportation and development of reliable transport and logistics infrastructure. Therefore, integration of these projects creates a multiplying effect for the development of a wide range of industries and unimpeded trade across the Eurasian continent. It also involves a significant expansion of bilateral cooperation in investment, transport and tourism.

Today we are making great efforts to maximize the transit potential of Kazakhstan. A number of infrastructure projects are being implemented in the country in the road, railway and aviation industries. The implementation of transport projects makes it possible to fully take advantage of the potential of the main transit routes passing through Kazakhstan. As a result, of all our work we have created a modern competitive transit hub in the country.

**Mr. Chairman,**

This year we mark the 27th anniversary of the Republic of Kazakhstan’s membership to the United Nations.

Over this period, our country has shown its full commitment to the purposes and objectives of the UN Charter and the principles of international law.

Last year Kazakhstan successfully completed a two-year term a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Kazakhstan became the first country from Central Asia to hold a seat on this important UN body. We used this platform to actively promote the interests of all countries of our region, including Afghanistan.

Today, bearing in mind that the primary responsibility of the national Governments for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDG’s rests with national governments, my country is one of the most active supporters of SDGs both at national and regional levels.

Most of the SDGs are consistent with the national strategic programs and documents. In 2018 Steering Council under the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan headed by the First Deputy Prime-Minister has been established as a national mechanism for coordination and implementation of SDGs in the country.

My country will present its first Voluntary National Review on progress of achieving SDGs at the High Level Political Forum in New York in July this year.

Kazakhstan as upper middle-income country is well-placed to share its lessons and best practices in SDGs implementation, particularly in the areas of poverty eradication, social protection, disaster risk reduction and sustainable economic development. We can use different platforms to promote regional and international dialogue on SDGs. They are Astana International Financial Center, International Center for Green Technologies and Investment Projects, Astana Economic Forum, UNDP supported
Regional Hub of Civil Service, Regional Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction, to name a few.

Recognizing the location of Kazakhstan and its role in the region, we proposed to create a UN Interregional Centre for SDGs in the former capital Almaty City, which will fill the geographical gap between UN centers in Istanbul and Bangkok and will give a notable support to Central Asia, Afghanistan and beyond. The main goal of the Centre is to unite the efforts of UN Agencies in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

To implement this initiative, Kazakhstan has allocated a new UN Building to the 16 Almaty-based UN agencies and programs with regional, subregional and multicounrty mandates. This state-of-the-art object is fully compliant with the UN security requirements and equipped with the most advanced equipment necessary for the smooth operation of UN agencies.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Kazakhstan is determined to continue contributing to sustainable development. Among recent activities to promote exchange of views between politicians, investors, economists and world-renowned scientists on the global challenges we hosted the XII Astana Economic Forum, the largest annual business event in Eurasia, which took place in Nur-Sultan on 16-17 May.

5,600 delegates and 460 speakers from 74 countries participated in the Forum, including Christine Lagarde, the Managing Director of IMF, Armen Sarkissian, the President of Armenia, Juan Manuel Santos, former President of Columbia and Nobel Peace Prize winner, ESCAP Executive secretary Armida Alisjahbana, and other prominent speakers.

A special session on SDG's was held, which allowed to take stock on our common needs and to identify ways to go forward. A number of important agreements were signed on the sidelines of the Forum including 43 investment contracts totaling 8.7 billion US dollars, as well as the Memorandum of understanding between the Eurasian Economic Commission and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

We believe that these platforms for sharing views, experiences and best practices are very helpful for enhancing the cooperation within the Asia-Pacific region and between the regions.

I thank you for your attention.