Country Statement of Republic of Korea
by H.E. Amb. Lee Taeho
Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs
On the occasion of the 75th UN ESCAP Commission
Bangkok, 27 May 2019

Mr. Chair.

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Korea, I would like to congratulate you on your election as the Chair.

I would also like to extend my appreciations to Dr. Alisjahbana (알리샤바나) and her staff at the Secretariat for their efforts to make the necessary arrangements for this meeting.

Mr. Chair,

The Asian and Pacific region has remained one of the most dynamic in the global economy, with a strong economic outlook. However, the economic gains have been unevenly distributed and income inequality has increased over the past 20 years. If an issue of inequality is left unaddressed, it can undermine the sustainable development in our region.
ESCAP, as the regional socio-economic development arm of the United Nations for the Asia-Pacific region, has an important role to play to make our society more equal and inclusive. ESCAP can assist Members in alleviating the inequality of opportunities and overcoming income inequality, thereby attaining a goal of fostering an inclusive society.

ESCAP and my government agreed earlier this year on a “Strategic Cooperation” Framework under which we will work together to help create an environment in Asia where nobody is left behind. I look forward to producing concrete outcomes from this effort.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Addressing inequality is an important task for all countries, irrespective of their level of development. Therefore, strenuous efforts at the national level are essential and ESCAP can help member states to share best practices.

The Republic of Korea, for its part, has identified social inequality as an issue requiring immediate policy action.
Under a comprehensive vision for an “Innovative and Inclusive Nation,” my government is investing in people, particularly the underprivileged, vulnerable groups, and providing them with new opportunities for economic participation. Efforts include increasing the minimum wage, providing job opportunities for the young and furthering women’s economic empowering, while strengthening social protection services for vulnerable groups. Through these efforts, Korea hopes to expand the growth potential of the economy, promote innovation, and restore economic vitality while bridging divides.

Mr. Chair,

In a region as large and diverse as the Asia-Pacific, there is no “one size fits all” solution. However, in light of the interdependency of our economies and societies, efforts can be made to address this issue of inequality through regional cooperation.

This is the thinking and vision embodied in Korea’s “New Southern Policy.” Korea seeks to foster greater cooperation at the regional level with our friends in South Asia. With people at the center of this policy, this policy initiative is aimed at promoting co-prosperity and peace, through more increased
interactions, exchanges and cooperation that mutually enhance the quality of lives of our people.

Further, Korea, together with other co-sponsors, has tabled a resolution on ‘air pollution.’ Clean air is indispensable for a basic life of people. Highlighting the need for collective action in our efforts to improve the quality of life in the region and addressing an important task of the SDGs, the resolution calls for member states to work together to reduce air pollution and mitigate its impact on human health. I look forward to the support of member states for its adoption.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Like air, peace is also indispensable for human beings to live together and enjoy social and economic prosperity. Peace on the Korean Peninsula is, no doubt, essential for sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific.

The Republic of Korea has now embarked on a path toward the complete denuclearization and the establishment of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. It is my hope that peace on the Korean Peninsula will breathe new life into the socio-economic landscape of the broader Asia-Pacific.
To date, positive developments have taken place. While the road ahead will not be easy and new challenges may arise, my government will continue to make efforts to maintain the momentum for dialogue and move the process forward. I look forward to continued support from the member states.

Mr. Chair,

Korea is confident that, as it has done so ever since its establishment in 1947, ESCAP will continue to play an important role in supporting members, particularly in their efforts to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

With the ever-changing economic and social development needs of the region, ESCAP is called on to be more responsive, adaptive, and effective. While welcoming the mid-term review of the conference structure, I also would like to call for ESCAP to take a more pro-active and result-oriented approach to emerging regional issues and to forge synergies with other global, regional and sub-regional fora.

Thank you.