At the outset, I would like to express my Delegation’s sincere thanks to UNESCAP Secretariat for organizing this important event with a very significant theme for all.

I would also like to thank the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting this event, the opening ceremony of which was graced by HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.
Inequality remains one of the greatest challenges facing not only developing countries but also those that are relatively better off. Middle-income nations are grappling with increasing inequality and a growing gap in the standard of living between the poor and the wealthy.

Although half of the world’s economies experienced accelerated growth in 2017 and 2018, sustainability of global economic growth in the face of rising financial, social and environmental challenges is questionable.

Advancements have been uneven across regions, between the sexes, and among people of different ages, wealth and locales, including urban and rural dwellers.

More than half of the world population has no access to social protection, perpetuating high levels of subsistence activities.

These imbalances push the targets of eradicating poverty and creating decent jobs for all further from reach.
Weak per capita income growth in regions where poverty levels and inequality remain high acts as a severe impediment to social development.

Despite substantial progress over the last two decades, more than 700 million people remain below the extreme poverty line, of which more than half are in Africa.

We also need a paradigm shift from the “do no harm” concept towards more proactive, complex and integrated solutions to address inequality.

**Distinguished guests,**

I would like to touch on the Turkish experience in providing equality and inclusive development for all which has been put forward as a model in many platforms.

The concept of sustainable development has been at the heart of Turkey’s development policies. The UN 2030 Agenda, which introduced a far-reaching plan of action has been integrated
into our development plans and sectoral strategies and supported at the Presidential level. We have put into place several strategies in mobilizing several sectors including the private sector for financing of development.

Turkey will present its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) me at the HLPF in July. In an effort to bring a holistic and comprehensive approach to the process, almost 3000 people and institutions were directly involved in the preparations. As the leading principle of the 2030 Agenda, “leaving no one behind” is given a separate chapter in the VNR, solely dedicated for the policies and practices towards vulnerable groups such as women, children, disabled people, youth and elderly and migrants.

Turkey’s policies towards reducing inequality within and among countries are holistically integrated across several areas ranging from basic constitutional rights to income distribution and from social security policies to fiscal regulations. Among those regulations are strengthening of vulnerable groups through various policy instruments, primarily social transfers, reducing inter-regional
development differences, tax policies in favor of lower income groups, increasing the amount and effectiveness of social assistance, increasing women’s labor force participation and sound measures against informal employment.

Turkey eradicated absolute poverty by means of policies that strengthened macroeconomic stability, economic growth and social transfers. There has also been a significant progress in reducing the share of informal workers in total employment. The wage subsidies through tax and social security premium incentives, especially for women, young people and minimum wage employees, increased the income of wage-earners. The Occupational Health and Safety Law in 2012 improved the rights, payments and conditions of workers. The Law on Trade Unions enacted the same year extended the union rights.

Moreover, the pro-poor policies pursued in sectors such as employment, social security, education, health and housing have significantly contributed to the eradication of poverty.
Distinguished guests,

The other policies and programs that helped eradication of poverty in Turkey are the diversification of and increase in the social assistance programs and the increase of girls' and disabled persons' access to education. At the local level, we have established "Gender Equality Units" in municipalities and we are preparing “Local Equality Action Plans.” Women’s participation in the labor force is supported by various policies such as the right to part-time work for six years after the birth of child and sixty days of income support.

The institutions that implement social assistance and support programs have been incorporated into a single entity under the Ministry for Family, Labor and Social Services to deliver a coordinated and focused action.
In order to raise the living standards of the poor and eradicate poverty, we have put into place several programs on basic needs, education and family. It is worth noting that education and health assistance programs were prioritized to reduce intergenerational poverty.

In order to eliminate inter-regional inequality, regional development agencies support and put into place several programs in a wide range of areas, including through capacity-building and consulting. These agencies also work in close cooperation with the private sector.

The Climate Change Strategy for 2010-2023 puts forward important measures to reduce the risks of environmental disasters on vulnerable groups. In this context, strategies and implementation plans have been developed to increase the resilience of the urban vulnerable to climatic risks.
In order to help eradicating poverty among countries, Turkey has increased its Official Development Assistance to 8.1 billion USD in 2017. We have also been sharing our experience and knowledge with our counterparts in bilateral and multilateral platforms.

And finally, the policies on migrants, asylum-seekers and people under temporary protection are developed with a sustainable development perspective. To date Turkey has spent more than 37 billion USD from its own resources for the Syrians in the country. Those people under temporary protection in Turkey are provided with equal education, health and humanitarian services and granted employment permits to prevent informal sector employment.

Turkey firmly supports the UN 2030 Agenda and remains ready to maintain its efforts to reduce inequality.

Thank you.