Statement by the U.S. Head of Delegation at the 75th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

May 28th, 2019

Mr. / Madam Chair, Madam Executive Secretary, distinguished colleagues, I am honored to represent the United States of America at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

The United States welcomes this year’s theme of empowering people and advancing inclusion and equality. Good governance, debt sustainability, protecting human rights, fostering science, technology, and innovation, developing partnerships, and protecting the environment are critical to ensure inclusiveness and equality. We should carefully consider the role ESCAP has to play in promoting inclusiveness and equality as a means to advance sustainable economic growth and development.

The United States is dedicated to country-led, market-driven economic development that unlocks the potential of all citizens. This commitment is reflected in our approach as the largest donor of official development
assistance, and as a source of significant private sector investment for growth in developing countries.

The United States works with new and non-traditional partners to promote equality and inclusion. We work with those partners to harness cutting-edge technologies, accelerate research and development, and scale innovation, including here in the Asia-Pacific region. Science, technology, and innovation will enable us to address income, health, environmental, and other development challenges that exacerbate inequality.

Over the past 70 years, the United States has prioritized freedom, openness, peace, and prosperity across the Asia-Pacific region. Our continuous and ongoing programs support good governance, rule of law, civil society, independent media, elections and political processes, and human rights.

Our work is driven by three focus areas: sound governance, just governance and responsive governance.

Sound governance programs increase public sector accountability and transparency, foster access to information, strengthen anti-corruption
measures, promote responsible borrowing, and encourage honest and open
procurement and public financial management practices.

Just governance programs strengthen the rule of law by supporting national
and sub-national legislatures and government institutions. These programs
promote legal and judicial reforms in accordance with international
standards, strengthen the integrity of elections and political processes, and
promote political party development. They strengthen inclusive public
participation in policymaking and build capacity to investigate and prosecute
financial and other crimes.

Responsive governance programs promote a strong, active civil society by
supporting organizations that foster fundamental freedoms and human rights.
Such programs support grassroots social accountability initiatives, strengthen
civic education, and increase the participation of women and minorities. They
expand people-to-people exchanges and increase access to credible
information through thriving, independent media.

Looking forward, good governance, job creation and equal employment
opportunities will drive inclusive and sustainable development. Countries
attract more investment when they respect human rights, minority and marginalized groups, the rule of law, democratic processes, and institutions. These principles are important for all countries, regardless of their respective levels of economic development. But we are concerned that linkages between human rights and sustainable development have not been more clearly articulated in this forum.

We underscore the importance of achieving equality between women and men and promoting women’s economic empowerment. We will achieve our development objectives only if all members of societies are fully and equitably engaged. This means that policies must aim to empower both women and men. The United States steadfastly supports efforts to advance women’s equality, protect the rights of women and girls, and promote the empowerment of women and youth.

Corruption undermines economic growth, hinders development, and weakens citizens’ faith in democracy. Corruption has a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable people and is a serious drag on economic growth. All countries must develop a comprehensive and inclusive strategy to fight corruption, including through engagement with civil society and the private
sector. This issue should be at the center of our deliberations on regional cooperation and collaboration.

The private sector has a key role in creating sustainable and inclusive growth. The United States collaborates, co-finances, and co-designs programs, tools, resources, and other initiatives with the private sector. We embrace the creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship of private enterprise. The private sector is a driver and sustainer of development, and we need to re-envision the public sector’s role accordingly.

The Asia-Pacific region can become a model of sustainable, inclusive development, but to achieve this, we must hold ourselves to the highest standards of quality, transparency, and inclusivity. No one country holds the answer, and no single country-sponsored program can replace meaningful national consultation on development goals.

While we have made remarkable progress toward alleviating poverty and fostering development, we still have much to do. We look forward to working with ESCAP – as well as with the private sector, civil society’s grass-roots
activists, academia, and faith-based and philanthropic organizations -- to provide opportunities for all.

Thank you very much, Mr. / Madame Chair