

## Statement by the Chair

### Reporting on the Third Ministerial on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration Meeting at the 79<sup>th</sup> Commission Session of ESCAP

(Pre-recorded message)

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

- It has been an honour to serve as the Chair of the Third Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration, which was held from 28 to 30 September 2022 under the theme on the theme of building resilience to crises through Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration.
- The Conference allowed discussing how regional economic cooperation and integration can help address the multiple challenges facing countries in the region, through market integration, seamless and sustainable connectivity, and an inclusive digital future,.
- The conference noted the importance of regional cooperation, through trade and investment, to support resilience and the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and noted the importance of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade.
- Regarding seamless and sustainable connectivity, the conference noted significant national efforts in the region to develop transport infrastructure and promote international transport corridors and recognized the central role of the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway Network, the trans-Asian Railway Network and Dry ports. It emphasized prioritizing further development of multimodal transport corridors, expanding the role of international rail transport and continued digitalization and facilitation of freight transport operations.
- In the context of energy connectivity, the conference considered the effects of rising energy prices on national economies and energy security and discussed net-zero and renewable energy targets as well as efforts to further develop domestic power generation resources, including renewable energy. The Conference

emphasized the importance of regional connectivity in the power sector as an enabler of renewable energy trade and in meeting national sustainability targets.

- With regard to digital connectivity the conference emphasized that the Covid-19 pandemic had accelerated the digital transformation and that digital infrastructure as well as secure and affordable digital services were indispensable for inclusive digital transformations. In this context it emphasized the importance of regional cooperation for an inclusive digital economy and society and the role of regional cooperation mechanisms, such as the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Network.
- In conclusion the Conference recommended that the secretariat continue to accord priority to enhancing economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific in the programme of work of the Commission and through its conference structure.
- Thank you.