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Statement by H.E. Ambassador Khusrav Noziri,
ECO Secretary General

at the

Seventh Session of the Committee on Environment and Development
of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
(ESCAP) at ministerial level

Under agenda item6: Protecting Our Planet through
Regional Cooperation and Solidarity in Asia and the Pacific

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Honorable Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for organizing the seventh session of the Committee on Environment and Development. I hope this meeting could help us enhance our development cooperation and make our planet healthier and cleaner for ourselves and for the generations to come.

Taking into account the earth's limits and everybody's right to a decent and healthy life, the significance of the transition to a more sustainable, low-carbon and resilient development pathway is clearer than ever. However, the big question is how to do and manage such a transition, while meeting urgent development needs. As a matter of fact, we are now in a period of confronting multiple crises in which, meeting urgent development needs while tackling the environment and climate crisis has become a more critical challenge, especially for developing countries. In such a context and in an era of COVID-19 recovery, it is evident that a lot should be done to reconcile the economic imperatives with the environmental ones in our region and to bring our people's increasing development needs together with the need to reduce emissions, biodiversity loss, and land degradation.

The Economic Cooperation Organization in line with calls of Heads of State or Government of its Member States in the "Ashgabat Consensus for Action" is looking for reinforcing cooperation in the field of environment and climate change and uniting the efforts of its member states in the direction of creating concrete effective mechanisms of regional cooperation in this sphere. In this context, my Organization is fully interested in improving the environmental performance of Asia and the Pacific and committed to promoting the environment and sustainable development in the region.

Countries in our region need to identify opportunities to further strengthen regional collaboration and their activities by designing more coherent plans to decrease nature and biodiversity loss, pollution, and land degradation on one side, and increase resource efficiency, the share of modern renewable energy, and ambitions in nationally determined contributions on the other side. However, taking into account the limited resources and capacity of countries especially some of the most vulnerable ones in our region, taking care of all these priorities by them requires proportionate means of implementation including adequate technical and financial assistance. This is not achievable without reinvigorated multilateralism and enhanced international and regional cooperation.

Our region has many potentials to show leadership in enhancing the resilience of the planet and society. To activate these potentials, there are some prerequisites at different levels. First of all and at the local level, we must raise awareness about and sensitize people to environmental issues. At the national level, our governments need to take more coordinated approaches in integrating the objectives of the three Rio Conventions including sustainable use and management of natural resources into national development plans and bringing together different

sectors and stakeholders to implement the Conventions. At the regional level, we require regional initiatives, where countries facing the same environmental problems come together to find solutions and call for synergies in investments and addressing perverse policies that continue to degrade the planet.

Last but not least, at the global level, we must call upon and urge the international community, including financing institutions and multilateral development partners and banks to strongly support the implementation of the priority actions identified at the regional level through the provision of adequate financial and technical assistance and capacity-building.

In the same vein, we take note of the important role of the United Nations bodies, funds, programs and specialized agencies, in line with their respective mandates especially ESCAP in cooperation with the UNEP and UNFCCC Regional Offices to share their experiences and practices to mainstream sustainability in the national plans and strategies across the region. Let's keep in mind that in absence of truly transformative options towards sustainability which are affordable and attractive for the states and the people in our region, making better decisions won't be highly likely. Moreover, what we need is not only green, but also a just transition that leaves no one behind. Let's not forget that if the green transition doesn't work for all, in the end, it will work for none. So the international community must make sure that all countries benefit from such a transition and make sure not to create an extra burden for those who can least afford it.

As a final point, let me underline the importance of further exploring opportunities of regional and sub-regional organizations like ECO. These organizations, if assisted, would be able to act as platforms to strengthen integrated approaches and increase collaborative regional and sub-regional action in priority areas like climate change, ecosystems and biodiversity, pollution and urban sustainability. The ECO Secretariat is prepared for facilitating such cooperation among the member states, and with other national governments, regional and international organizations to achieve the SDGs, enhance the resilience of our region and societies, and promote the global environmental agenda.

I thank you for your attention.