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**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN**  
**THIMPHU**

**Statement (pre-recorded message) by Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Bhutan H.E. (Dr.) Tandi Dorji for the high-level opening of the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN-ESCAP Commission on 23 May 2022 in Bangkok.**

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**Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen –**

1. I bring you the warm greetings of His Majesty The King and people of Bhutan on this momentous occasion. It gives me great pleasure to address this august gathering today as we celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ESCAP under the dynamic leadership of Madam Executive Secretary and her able team.
2. Over the last 50 years, Bhutan has greatly benefited from our close association with the institution. The ESCAP's technical assistance and support extended in human resource development have benefited us immensely.
3. I am also pleased to welcome this year's theme of the session - to advance sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. It is timely and appropriate to re-think sustainability and develop new strategies to advance the sustainable development goals.
4. As we celebrate our collective achievements today, it is also time to take stock of the achievements made thus far. It is evident from the ESCAP's SDG Report 2022 and the current trajectory that our region is not on track to achieve most of the goals by 2030. This is a grave concern and casts a grim prospect for the region's future, which calls for redoubling our efforts to advance sustainable goals.

**Excellencies**

5. The progress in the region and worldwide has been decelerated by the pandemic and it is only going to get worse with the conflict in Europe. Millions of people in our region alone are pushed back into desperate situations. People have lost jobs and retrograded to extreme poverty thereby widening the inequality gap.
6. Despite these challenges, it also provides an opportunity to rethink the future of the region - to galvanize our actions and to build back better and green. Together we must cooperate and find solutions to the current crisis and prevent future emergencies such as this.
7. In this connection, we must revisit regional plans and fiscal policies for a future that is more resilient and sustainable with the purpose of leaving no one behind.



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8. Towards this, we must look into how to facilitate seamless movement of essential commodities during times of crisis. The international financial institutions should continue to play a proactive role for the region enabling easy access to financial needs.
9. Governments alone cannot tackle the sea of challenges we face today. Tackling crises of this scale requires a whole-of-society approach with heightened levels of regional effort and cooperation.

**Excellencies**

10. Bhutan has embraced the sustainable development path and has mainstreamed the SDGs into our national plans and programs.
11. We have made broad-based progress across most of the SDGs. But we still have a lot to do given the significant impacts of the pandemic. So far, we have presented two Voluntary National Review Reports on SDGs to the UN High Level Political Forum, one in 2018 and the other in 2021.
12. Despite the adverse impacts of the pandemic on the socioeconomic landscape, we are blessed to have the enlightened leadership of His Majesty the King, under whose constant guidance, the government introduced various interventions aimed at minimizing the impacts of the pandemic with targeted economic and social measures projected towards a reassuring path of recovery.
13. Many other significant reforms are currently taking place in Bhutan in the civil service, education and economic sectors. These reforms are geared towards boosting our economy to suit the needs of time.
14. **In conclusion** - Realigning the ESCAP's priorities and activities towards addressing the economic recovery in the region is essential. It is also important for UNESCAP to assess and analyze the dynamics of the pandemic and see how our region should be better prepared to tackle future health and economic crises.
15. Lastly, we look forward to ESCAP's continued leadership and support. We have full confidence that ESCAP will continue to play the leading role in achieving the region's sustainable and green recovery. I wish you a very successful session and fruitful deliberations.

I thank you and Tashi Delek!