Remarks by CICA Secretary General Amb. Kairat Sarybay during the High-level dialogue with subregional organizations "Current and emerging policy issues for inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific"

Bangkok, 23 April 2025

Distinguished Chair,

Madame Executive Secretary,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be back in Bangkok to join the 81st Commission session and address this high-level subregional dialogue.

As ESCAP has been widely recognised as an efficient platform for a consolidated voice of Asia and the Pacific on the most important issues, CICA Secretariat attaches great importance to further strengthening the CICA-ESCAP interaction which we consider an essential part of greater synergy for various multilateral arrangements in Asia-Pacific.

With this in mind I strongly believe that regular dialogue between regional organizations, including interaction among the heads of their respective executive bodies, significantly contributes to inclusive and sustainable development of our vast region, and serves to our countries' path towards the most effective solutions to common social, economic and environmental problems. I am confident that the deliberations and outcomes of the 81st Commission will be another important step in this direction.

Esteemed colleagues and delegates,

In December 2024, Azerbaijan took up the CICA Chairmanship for 2024-2026 and will further propel the CICA process under the theme of "Stronger

CICA, connectivity, digitalization and sustainable growth in Asia", based on its extensive experience in leading prominent global platforms and serving as a bridge-builder on the international stage.

The Chairmanship of Azerbaijan is focused on three pillars: CICA's transformation into a full-fledged international organization, effective implementation of confidence-building measures and increasing synergy and interaction with other international and regional platforms.

Aiming to develop this synergy, CICA is prepared to further enhance its partnerships and cooperation with regional institutions enabling us to act as a driving force for positive change across Asia. Preserving the core value of confidence building as a prerequisite for a more profound practically oriented and institutionalized cooperation in the next two years CICA will also pursue greater cross-sectoral cooperation, from youth and academic engagement to enhancing economic dimension, paying due attention to transport connectivity, digitalization, climate, agriculture, cultural heritage preservation, cultural exchanges, and cyber-security issues. These dimensions align with various aspects of sustainable development goals, underscoring our commitment to stability, cooperation and regional prosperity.

Though urbanization is not directly related to the current CICA agenda, many aspects of our sectoral dialogue can contribute to a resilient and inclusive urban growth. Among them promotion of small and medium enterprises, food and energy security, digitalization, disaster management, sustainable development, and environment protection.

In particular, last August The CICA Ministerial Conference on Environmental Issues resulted in a high-level statement reflecting the commitment of our Member States to cooperate in accordance with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, to improve the quality of life, paying special attention to climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation

and pollution control, and strengthen water management through capacity building and technology exchange.

The CICA Secretariat has been also promoting urban greenery through its showcase project called CICA Alley, calling on Member States to plant such alleys in their major cities.

Furthermore, mutual benefits may be achieved through alignment of CICA's regional dialogue platform with ESCAP's expertise in policy innovation and capacity-building. This collaboration could enhance regional cooperation, including for resilient and sustainable urban development, creating smart-city and climate-resilient infrastructure, and green economic growth through knowledge-sharing, best practices exchange, and pilot initiatives supporting SDGs.

Notably, in April 2024 during the 80th Commission session the CICA Secretariat and UN ESCAP jointly organized a side-event on leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development, that featured valuable expert exchange on digital economy promotion, emergency situation monitoring, natural disaster management, and fostering multilateral cooperation.

Another example of CICA-UN partnership is the joint initiative of the CICA Secretariat and UN Volunteers to conduct a review of the best volunteerism practices in CICA Member States and organize a thematic event and photo exhibition next year to mark the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development. It is our common understanding that volunteerism is an important aspect of civic engagement, that can also play an important role in building resilient urban communities.

CICA is also ready to engage with our partner regional organizations in development assistance and project management. I am happy to report that in March 2025 first ever project under the CICA Fund was implemented. The project "Advancing Wheat Cultivation for Sustainable Development in Central

Afghanistan” was proposed by Kazakhstan for providing agricultural assistance to 300 vulnerable Afghan farmers in Logar Province for building long-term resilience, who were facing consistent humanitarian crisis. The project was jointly funded by CICA, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency and Islamic Organization for Food Security.

Ladies and gentlemen

This high-level dialogue and its distinguished speakers attest to the fact that synergy among regional mechanisms is not just a goal but a necessity in today’s interconnected world. With its vast geographical reach, broad agenda and diverse toolkit, CICA is fully capable to consolidate the collective wisdom of Asian nations and act as a bridge between various organizations and an outreach for their best practices and solutions, fostering greater cooperation and coordination.

Thank you.