



**ECOSOC** | Economic  
and Social  
Council | **75**

## **OPENING REMARKS**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. COLLEN V. KELAPILE  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC  
AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

**AT THE**

**78<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR  
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP)**

**23 MAY 2022  
10:00 – 12:30 HOURS**

**UN CONFERENCE CENTRE – ESCAP HALL  
BANGKOK, THAILAND**

*Please check against delivery.*

- **His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly;**
- **His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, via video;**
- **His Excellency General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand;**
- **His Excellency Mr. Vijavat Isarabhakdi, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and Chair of the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific;**
- **Madam Executive Secretary;**
- **Excellencies;**
- **Distinguished Delegates;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. It is a great honour and pleasure to join you virtually today at the opening of the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in the magnificent City of Bangkok.

2. This is a historic session marking the culmination of the commemorations of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ESCAP founded in March 1947 as the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which I currently lead as its President.
3. The 78<sup>th</sup> session is held at a crucial time for the world and for the global development agenda.
4. As many countries are still coping with the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governments throughout the world are considering their options on how best to emerge from the health crisis, and to rebuild their societies and economies in an inclusive, more sustainable and just manner while battling with the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.
5. In this respect, I am very pleased that Member States in Asia and the Pacific region have demonstrated their commitment to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development by being the first region to develop a road map to implement this Agenda.

6. The societal effects of the pandemic have been devastating. Millions of families have lost loved ones and caretakers.
7. Businesses and enterprises have lost leaders and workers. Entire sectors of the economy have witnessed dramatic drops in activity, sometimes closing down altogether.
8. The road to recovery is still long for many of us. And for this we need equity of vaccine distribution and access. No one is safe until we are all safe to continue with our lives without disruptions.
9. At the same time, complex geopolitical situation has devastating consequences. UNCTAD estimates that the world economy will be a full percentage point of GDP growth lower than expected due to the war, which is severely disrupting already tight food, energy, and financial markets.

10. FAO has shown that food prices are 34% higher than this time last year and crude oil prices have increased by around 60%, and gas and fertilizer prices have more than doubled.
11. This has come to the detriment of many countries dependent on food and fuel imports for its populations, including notably my own region, Africa.
12. Therefore, the theme of the 78<sup>th</sup> session, namely, **“A common agenda to advance sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific,”** could not be more appropriate.
13. I have taken note with much interest of the theme study for the session. It is describing ways to achieve more inclusive and sustainable post-pandemic recovery.
14. It rightly identifies elements for a common agenda for present and future generations centered on protecting people and the planet, leveraging digital

opportunities, trading and investing more together, raising financial resources and managing debt.

15. And it justly underlines the need to listen and work with young people, placing women at the center for policy actions and people-centered partnerships.
16. We must find ways to cooperate and deal with the effects of conflict and the pandemic. We must find creative, peaceful and long-term solutions to these new challenges. As we do so, we should not lose sight of the vision that we agreed on only seven years ago, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
17. The 78<sup>th</sup> ESCAP session will be an excellent opportunity to discuss on how we are going to address these new challenges, and re-shape the future of global and regional cooperation to realize the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

18. We will no doubt need to renew our commitment to multilateralism, global solidarity and regional cooperation.
19. From my own perspective, regional cooperation is the first stop of support and solidarity. ESCAP, just like all the other UN economic commissions, has an extensive track record of mutually assisting its member states in terms of mutual responses, economic guidance and technical support, and regional standard-setting.
20. ESCAP, then called Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, was established in March 1947 by ECOSOC resolution 37(IV), as a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, with the aim to help the region rebuild after the war. The Commission provided Governments of the region for the first time in history a platform to meet to discuss common economic problems, establish agreed principles of action and carry out policies determined by mutual agreement.

21. The region has come a long way since 1947, but the need for multilateralism and regional cooperation is as great today as it was seventy-five years ago.
22. Currently, the ECOSOC Bureau is doing its part to ensure we make the best use of the coordinating function of the Council in line with the General Assembly resolution 75/290 A. As you are aware, the Council oversees a complex system of functional commissions, expert bodies, as well as the five regional commissions.
23. Informal consultations on a set of thematic clusters are being concluded. Our discussions have been focused on four clusters. First, to make sure that the ECOSOC system, including its subsidiary bodies, continue to and improve on, aligning with the 2030 Agenda.
24. Second, we are reviewing the working methods of the subsidiary bodies and exploring how we can learn from best practices there. Third, coordination

issues among subsidiary bodies are being addressed, including identifying possible areas for synergies.

25. Fourth, we are exploring how the Council can best use the outcomes of its subsidiary bodies. This process will culminate with an agreement on a way forward at the ECOSOC Management Segment to take place next week, from 8 to 9 June.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

26. As all of our countries stand at a crossroads where sustainable recovery is within reach, the Commission will also offer a space to identify and discuss the mechanisms and means to build the resilience of people and nations in Asia and the Pacific in the aftermath of COVID-19 and ensure nature-positive economic growth, inclusive societies and protect the environment.
27. Let me conclude by reminding you that the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development as the main review platform for the implementation of

the 2030 Agenda is taking place in New York from 5 to 15 July in person.

28. As this Commission's meeting is crucial for this region, so is HLPF for the global level. We will all come together at the HLPF to discuss our global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and which measures we can undertake for sustainable recovery through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achievement of SDGs specifically focusing on SDG 4 on education, 5 on gender, 14 on ocean, 15 on terrestrial biodiversity and 17 on global partnership.
29. And for this we need regional views and contribution. Seven countries from your region are presenting VNRs this year. We are looking forward to learning where they are in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda and how they are recovering from the pandemic. Thus, I invite you all to come to New York to the HLPF at the highest level possible and contribute your perspective to global discussions.

30. I thank you and I am looking forward to engaging in the discussions with you and to learn from your experiences.

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