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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the continued resilience of countries in Asia and the Pacific, several policy issues for inclusive and sustainable development remain.

The convergence of climate change, demographic change and technological advancements, as well as trade fragmentation and fiscal consolidation could lead to greater uncertainties and widening socioeconomic disparities.

First, climate change is our most defining challenge.

With recent years the warmest on record, we are rapidly approaching the +1.5C degree threshold. The impact of climate change on agriculture, health, human settlements and disasters will alter the way we live.

With our regional economy accounting for three-fifths of global production, our shifts toward renewable energy and energy efficiency will significantly reduce global carbon emissions.

Our SDG 7 road maps, aimed at identifying energy policy gaps and strengthening national strategies, have been developed with this aim. Cross-border power trade that optimizes the use of renewables could also enhance regional energy security.

Second, a fundamental demographic shift is taking place.

With our youth as our greatest assets, how we invest in our future generations and allow them to be innovative, inclusive and resilient will determine the future. Improving education, health and employment opportunities are priorities.

We should likewise address the demographic challenge of ageing so that the elderly reap the benefits of longevity. And with millions of people living precariously above the poverty line, advancing technologies may push many who cannot adapt back into poverty.

Greater labour force participation, social protection and intergenerational collaboration are needed to ensure that everyone, including women, older generations and persons with disabilities, remains well-integrated into society.

For many, however, this remains a distant goal.

Despite our commitment to leave no one behind, nearly half of the people in our region are not protected through pension schemes, universal health care and social security. Those that exist fall far short of the coverage and level of benefit needed.

Comprehensive policies and schemes designed for our societies, now and in the future, are needed. To support the development of inclusive policies, our platform, Leaving No-One Behind, explains how different variables interact to create unequal access to opportunities.

Third is emerging technology.

In our rapidly evolving world, emerging technologies should be harnessed to advance inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. Remote sensing and GIS technology, for example, advance climate action and significantly reduce disaster risk.

In addition to the development of enabling policy, legal and regulatory frameworks and institutions, harnessing of emerging technologies calls for investment in infrastructure that supports innovation.

Development of regional and subregional implementation plans could likewise accelerate digital transformation, especially in smaller countries. Pooling knowledge and expertise could likewise allow countries to use emerging technologies to their full extent.

Our Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative enables countries to bridge the digital divide, provide digital skills training and promote inclusive digital economies. Durable and effective partnerships would also be a key element for capacity building, financing and technology transfer.

Each of our initiatives is tailored to support the development challenges of our member States and scaled across the region.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

Addressing these intertwined challenges, including through our support, calls for the development of common enabling conditions across countries.

- First and foremost, political leadership should overcome vested interests. Transparency and accountability increase public trust and enable difficult reforms.

- Second, increasing uncertainty, given the constant dynamic change, calls for adaptive policymaking. Agile statistical systems should provide real-time data to support evidence-based policymaking while new ideas tested to see how they can better address evolving challenges.

- Third, addressing complex systemic issues calls for a whole-of-society approach. Governments should leverage the technical capacity and financial resources of the business sector and hold regular consultations with civil society.

- Finally, given the diverse levels of development and needs of countries in Asia and the Pacific, stronger regional cooperation is critical.

Global shifts will continue to affect each of us. It is important that we anticipate the challenges that have yet to emerge.

Key economies of Asia and the Pacific, driven by the financial resources and technologies of their private sectors, will continue to influence global as well as regional dynamics.

The deepening and widening of regional initiatives as well as their convergence with others could complement existing efforts in the region.

With the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, comprising more than half of the countries in Asia and the Pacific, subregional cooperation may also be key to ensuring their regional integration.

Given the capacities available in our region, the solutions to the challenges are within our grasp.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

We once again reaffirm our commitments set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and assess how Asia and the Pacific, as a region, could attain our Goals.

I should like to invite the Commission to provide insights on ways to overcome our common challenges together through strengthened regional cooperation.

With these words, I thank you.