

**Special Message by H.E. Salome Zourabichvili, President of Georgia, for the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of  
UNESCAP**

(23 May 2022)

*Transcript provided by the Communications Service of the Administration of the President of Georgia*

Madam Executive Secretary, Excellencies,

It is my great pleasure to address the 78<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and to congratulate you on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Commission.

While taking stock of the significant progress achieved over the years, new and serious challenges that have been emerging in the region and worldwide, need now to be addressed.

In this globalized world, challenges have become more global.

First the COVID pandemic and climate change induced disasters have revealed vulnerabilities of all our societies and put to the test their resilience.

Now just as we begin to experience recovery from the pandemic, a new global crisis has erupted.

Russia's ongoing full-scale military aggression in Ukraine has resulted in a human and humanitarian tragedy with the loss of life by the thousands, the destruction of urban centers and large segments of the economy, population displacements by the millions.

At the same time, the negative effects and disruptions go far beyond Ukraine and are affecting the growth of many UNESCAP members, for disregard of the principles and norms of International Law, in particular respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity or the inviolability of borders cannot but directly conflict with the achievements in the SDG implementation.

The energy and land infrastructures that served as a bridge between Europe and Central Asia is being torn apart.

Effects of the disruptions of food and other supply chains are considerable.

We already know that it will result in growth of poverty and inequality and undermine the implementation of sustainable development goals.

This only underlines the need for decisive actions to end the war as soon as possible.

The war highlights also the need for a rapid development of alternative transportation systems in order to sustain the supply chains between Europe and Asia.

Notwithstanding the challenges in its neighborhood, Georgia, due to its geographic location as a bridge between Europe and Asia and a country located on the old silk road, is involved in intense cooperation with the Asia Pacific region to develop new energy, transport, broadband connectivity projects.

The geopolitical context is further boosting Georgia's role as gateway point to Asia and as an essential transit/logistical hub, a crucial link in the Middle Corridor for moving goods through the Channel that links the Black Sea, the Caucasus and across the Eurasian continent.

While looking at a new historic milestone on its path towards European integration, through the submission of its membership application, Georgia seeks to develop its ties with Asian economies in particular through Free Trade agreements and increased cooperation.

In these difficult times, the role of ESCAP is ever more crucial in advancing the goals of sustainable development, addressing new challenges and helping intensify the interaction and cooperation within the Asia-Pacific region.

Let me wish you a very productive and successful session.