



STATEMENT BY Ms KATHRYN CLARKSON

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**ON BEHALF OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND
RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES**

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Madam / Mr. Chair, Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, Distinguished Participants

On behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and our 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, we welcome this focus on accelerating the recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia Pacific.

The humanitarian crisis caused by COVID-19 has been defined by profound and persistent inequities. All over the world, we have witnessed that migrants, persons with disabilities, older persons, women, and children living in fragile settings or in countries with under-resourced health systems are disproportionately affected by diseases, disasters, and displacement.

Over two years on, millions of lives are still at stake - much of the world still lacks high vaccination coverage, robust health systems or testing capacities. We need to continue to work together to make equitable access to vaccines, diagnostics and treatments a reality, by putting local communities at the centre of our response.

Our IFRC World Disasters Report, just launched in January included lessons from the COVID19 pandemic and recommendations on recovery. The report highlighted that the world wasn't well prepared for the COVID19 pandemic and the importance of being ready and more prepared for



future pandemics and public health emergencies. Laws and policy in particular have a central role in protecting communities, form the foundation of disaster risk management, and regulate how, when and by whom emergency response activities are carried out. We urge governments to use the opportunity now to update and improve legal preparedness for Public Health Emergencies.

Disasters do not stop for pandemics though, and while dealing with COVID-19, many communities around the world continue to suffer from the impacts of climate- and weather-related disasters. The IFRC estimates that 83% of all disasters are caused by climate- and weather-related events, rising by almost 35% over the last three decades and impacting over 1.7 billion people around the world. Cities in the Asia Pacific currently drive climate change: they consume 80% of the region's energy and generate 75% of its CO2 emissions.

Our World Disasters Report also highlights the compounding effects of climate change with poverty, displacement, and the COVID-19 pandemic particularly affect people living in urban environments, causing an increase in the digital divide, urban violence, homelessness, tenuous employment, and mental health issues.

Rapid and drastic changes are needed to our existing urban systems to deal with the impacts of climate change, disasters, migration, and pandemics, and we at IFRC remain committed to supporting the most vulnerable and hard to reach as they cope with these increasing and complex disasters.

We need to focus our actions more at the local level to prevent and reduce disaster impacts and strengthen the resilience of communities. We urge States to prioritize three main actions: The first is to Prepare and strengthen community resilience through a multi-hazard approach to disasters. The second is to scale up the use of early warning and early action systems and finally to focus our efforts on those most at risk.

IFRC recently committed during COP27 to the "Early Warnings for All" initiative, closely collaborating with UN partners, particularly to ensure communities are prepared to respond to early warnings, that will save lives.

Let me conclude by thanking the UNESCAP, the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand as well as the governments and partners present here today for their joint efforts to accelerate the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia Pacific. The IFRC and our National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies will continue to work alongside new and existing partners to support our communities in preparing for and recovering from acute and protracted emergencies, to mitigate the impacts of humanitarian crises, and to reach the most vulnerable, so that no one is left behind.