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Speech by
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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Assalamu Alaikum and a very good day to all of you.

It is a pleasure for me to address this 81st Session of UNESCAP. I would like to thank the Royal Thai Government and the UNESCAP for convening this meeting under the timely theme: *"Regional Cooperation for Resilient and Sustainable Urban Development."*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to take a moment to reflect on the situation in my own country. Bangladesh's interim government assumed office on August 8, 2024; following a mass uprising led by students. We inherited a devastating economy, left by the previous autocratic regime. Since then, we've launched a reform process and worked to restore discipline in the financial sector, and have succeeded in many direction including reducing inflation to 9.3% in February—the lowest in two year's history—and we've also seen record amounts of remittances coming in. Investor confidence is returning, and we are moving steadily toward stability and growth.

We just have the four day long international summit of investors. 400 plus investors from 50 countries participated.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sustainable urban development, the topic of this conference, is now central to our progress. With one of the highest population densities in the world, Bangladesh faces acute urban challenges—climate vulnerability, infrastructure gaps, and social inequality. Yet we remain committed to building inclusive and climate-resilient economy.

As we prepare for LDC graduation next year, we must ensure our urban transformation is not only economically sound but also socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable. Climate change remains our gravest threat. Rising seas, floods, and cyclones severely impact our

cities. We call for enhanced global cooperation and effective climate financing to support our adaptation efforts.

In response to climate vulnerabilities, we are investing in green and climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable housing, and nature-based solutions. Our low-cost housing initiatives support climate-vulnerable populations, while urban wetland restoration and green building materials are reducing environmental stress.

Distinguished Delegates,

Inclusive development remains a top priority for Bangladesh. Our experience in microfinance and social business has shown that financial inclusion is a powerful tool against poverty. We are now applying the same methodology to urban development—ensuring that every citizen has access to housing, essential services, and economic opportunities. But we have far to go. We look forward to working with our global partners to make this happen.

At the heart of our vision is the Three Zero Vision—zero wealth concentration to end poverty, zero unemployment by unleashing entrepreneurship in all, and zero net carbon emissions. Social business, a form of business that I have been promoting worldwide, plays a crucial role in this effort. Unlike traditional enterprises, social businesses are designed to solve human and environmental problems in a sustainable business way with no intention of making personal profit. From healthcare to clean energy, to clean water and housing, from communications to information technology-this model has the potential to transform lives. I urge all global leaders in general and Asian and Pacific leaders in particular to work together for working to build a sustainable world shared by all people.

Madam Chair,

Challenges like climate change, inequality, and urban stress extend beyond national borders, making regional cooperation necessary and indispensable. I have been advocating for regional as well as global cooperation in all directions to solve problems together rather than at the cost of someone else. Let us strengthen our partnerships, mobilize the creativity of the young people- both girls and boys to create new world of three zeros- zero net carbon emission, zero wealth concentration and zero unemployment. We are at a critical moment in the world's history. With upcoming vast of new technologies around us we can make all impossibles possible if we make up our mind to do it. It is now a question of where we want to go rather than how we want to go. If we can arrive at the firm decision on where, finding how will be a fun thing to do for our young people.

Before I conclude, I thank ESCAP for providing this valuable platform for our occasional reflection on where we are in our journey or even to raise the question- are we really in a journey at all.

Thank you all for your attention.