Distinguished participants and colleagues

Good afternoon, good evening,

I convey my warm welcome to all participants and colleagues for joining the ‘Asia-Pacific Regional Community Networks Summit’ today.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr. Rajnesh Singh, Regional Vice-President of the Internet Society and his team, for proposing us a good opportunity to co-host this important regional event. I would also like to thank Hon. Mr. Mohamed Shareef, State Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Technology of the Maldives and the current Chair of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Committee for kindly agreeing to our invitation to deliver an opening statement in the event today.

ESCAP secretariat and the Internet Society has cooperated together to promote Internet connectivity in the Asia Pacific region. It is needless to say the importance of universal and affordable access to broadband connectivity for sustainable growth and for overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic. Many member States have made good progress in improving digital connectivity including rural-urban connectivity.

ESCAP, in collaboration with member States and partner organizations, has been developing the action plan of the Asia Pacific Information Superhighway 2022 - 2026. This action plan will serve as a blueprint for regional cooperative actions that promote digital connectivity and digital transformation, as underlying foundations for regional economic connectivity and an inclusive digital economy.

In this connection, rural connectivity is one of identified key actions in the region. Digital connectivity in rural areas and to urban markets through community
network is critical in terms of no one left behind as well as new incomes, educations and jobs.

This event will provide a good opportunity for us to discuss on the opportunities and challenges on how to strengthen digital connectivity, focusing on rural community connectivity.

I wish all participants a fruitful event.

Thank you very much.