SPEECH WORD COUNT: 372

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend my gratitude to the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia, Ms. Armida Salsiah Alishjahbana, for inviting me to deliver these remarks.

This Session's theme – "Regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific" – could not be more timely, or important.

Cities are a major source of global economic strength.

And they are central to our efforts to achieve the Sutainable Development Goals by 2030.

They play a key role in tackling climate change.

And they serve as major hubs for transport, innovation and employment across all sectors.

In Asia and the Pacific, urban areas account for an exceptional 80 percent of gross domestic product.

And this is only growing, at a rapid pace and scale.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction estimates that 60 percent of people will live in urban areas by 2030.

If countries are to reap the full benefits of urbanisation in an equitable and socially just manner, we must act with purpose – and with urgency.

Urban areas across the region continue to experience the impacts of social, economic and climate vulnerabilities in vastly different ways.

This prevents the benefits of economic growth from reaching all urban dwellers equally.

And this requires that we deepen regional collaboration and share insights from local experiences.

So, I urge Member States to implement resilient urban policies throughout the region.

By investing in sustainable public infrastructure and in people.

By creating green spaces.

By continuing to enhance urban planning and management in participatory and inclusive ways.

And by seizing the opportunity presented by the Pact for the Future to strengthen regional collaboration to these ends.

The upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development offers an opportunity to reform the global financial architecture.

And to mobilize resources towards development priorities, including sound urbanisation policies that embrace resilience and reflect local contexts.

Excellencies,

I commend the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for its valued partnership.

And I encourage the region to keep leading by example.

- Prioritising sustainability, and
- Harnessing the potential of regional collaboration to bring about a more just, prosperous and equitable future for all.

I thank you.