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Statement (Draft)

3 minutes

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Honourable Chair, Excellencies, Esteemed Guests,

I would like to extend my appreciation to the Government of Turkmenistan for the invitation extended to me to address TurkmenTEL 2023. As a regional platform that encourages dialogue and collaboration on key digital issues related to connectivity, innovation and commerce, the objectives resonate well with ESCAP's work on digital transformation.

The rapid adoption of digital technologies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically transformed the socio-economic activities of citizens across the Asia-Pacific region. One of the most profound changes has been the acceleration in the shift towards a digital society, such as online working, teaching and socializing. In the digital society, we are not defined by the miles that separate us, but by the connections that bind us.

In this digital era, Turkmenistan is showcasing a remarkable commitment to fostering a digital ecosystem that goes well beyond its borders. The focus on economic digitalization, unified communications networks, and cybersecurity, as highlighted in this conference, aligns with OUR vision of a connected and inclusive Asia-Pacific.

ESCAP is working with member States in fostering digital connectivity and transformation through "the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (APIS)



platform”. This regional cooperative mechanism, seeks to bridge the digital divide, promoting universal digital connectivity, scaling up digital technology applications for an inclusive digital economy and society, and enhancing the use and management of digital data.

In order to promote Connectivity, Innovation and Commerce as drivers of socio-economic development, I propose three key policy measures: (1) leverage public funds to invest in digital connectivity infrastructures that bring reliable, affordable and safe connectivity to all; (2) prioritize capacity building and digital literacy programmes tailored not only to the specialized skills that will enhance employment and earning opportunities for the youth but also aimed at promoting lifelong learning skills for productive ageing. In this regard, policy and regulatory frameworks that enhance the secure use and management of digital data have assumed importance; and (3) promote global and regional cooperation to share good policies, good practices. In this regard, I am pleased to inform you that the theme for the intergovernmental dialogue of the 80th Session of the Commission to be held from 15-19 April 2024 on Bangkok, Thailand, will be on digital innovations as accelerators of SDG implementation. I am also pleased to inform you that this will be followed by up by an ESCAP Ministerial Conference on Digital Transformation, which the Government of Kazakhstan has generously offered to host in Astana at the end of August 2024.

Building on such partnerships, I look forward to strengthened cooperation between ESCAP and the Government of Turkmenistan, as a vital partner in this journey towards a common digital future for shared prosperity.

Thank you.