

## **Statement by the 7<sup>th</sup> APFSD Chair**

**H.E. Samantha K. Jayasuriya, Ambassador Extraordinary  
and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Sri  
Lanka to ESCAP**

Reporting on the Seventh Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable  
Development at the High-level Political Forum

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Mr. Chair,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates

Greetings to All of you.

As Chair of the Seventh Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) I am pleased to report on key outcomes of the forum, which met on May 20, 2020 on the theme: “Accelerating action for and delivery of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific”.

- The Seventh APFSD was conducted entirely through videoconferencing, the first intergovernmental meeting at ESCAP to be held in such a modality. The forum drew 730 delegates from member States, major groups and other stakeholders, and UN agencies, including from UN Country Teams, and in addition attracted over 6000 online viewers.
- Prior to the APFSD, the secretariat organized a series of seven virtual multi-stakeholder consultations on the theme of the Forum, which fed into a Chair’s statement prepared by the Bureau of the Sixth Forum and was annexed to the report of the Forum.

Let me now address the important outcomes of the APFSD:

- The Seventh APFSD called on multi-stakeholder partnerships to preserve development gains and to “build forward” post-COVID-19, underscoring the urgency to accelerate action in our region.
- The Forum provided an opportunity to share perspectives on actions supporting the global decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific, focusing on the transformative processes needed to address the complexity of the socioeconomic, cultural and institutional barriers to change, especially in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Forum underscored that openness and transparency on causes and impacts of COVID-19 will ensure that we, as a global community, address these issues together. Countries in the region can unite efforts by identifying best practices and new ways of working and approaches and sharing them with other member States. The APFSD is the Forum best suited for this endeavor.
- While the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes a severe crisis, it also provides an opportunity to accelerate SDG implementation as an integral part of efforts to recover from the crisis and to “build forward”. This will require a change in mindsets and a search for new and transformative ways of working which prioritizes sustainability, places humans at center, and leaves no one behind.

- Countries delivering their voluntary national reviews at the HLPF in 2020 shared lessons learnt. Interventions from participants underscored how the APFSD and the twinning programme facilitated by the Secretariat plays a pivotal role in providing the key regional space for member States to discuss their VNRs, identify and exchange good practices, bridge concerted efforts of all stakeholders in the region as well as to prepare for their review at the HLPF later on in the year.
- Moreover, delegates called for the sharing of experiences, lessons learned and strategies on the COVID-19 response to be integrated into the VNR process.
- I also appreciated that ESCAP, through the APFSD, facilitated interagency cooperation presenting the system-wide results of the United Nations' efforts at the regional level in support of the 2030 Agenda, and launched the SDG Partnership report with the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme.

The outcomes of this Forum demonstrate that member States are unwavering in their commitment to the SDGs. Deliberations at the APFSD show that our countries, supported by ESCAP, are engaged in a concerted regional response to building back better after the COVID 19 crisis and to turn this enormous challenge into an opportunity.

I look forward, in my capacity of Chair, to support the APFSD over the next year by help steering a transformative approach for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

I thank you.