Summary report on the
80th Session of the
Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
"Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific"

Themed "Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable
development in Asia and the Pacific"
Bangkok, Thailand
22-24 April 2024

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Morning Plenary (Day 1)

Overview

The 80th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) took place from 22 to 26 April 2024 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok. This high-level session brought together government officials, policymakers, and other stakeholders to discuss "Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific." It aimed to explore the role of digital technology in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and address region-wide challenges in climate action, energy access, public debt sustainability, and other critical areas.

Opening Ceremony

The session began with a traditional flag parade, showcasing the unity and diversity of the Asia-Pacific region. Delegates and special guests, including the Prime Minister of Thailand, attended the opening ceremony. The Prime Minister delivered the keynote address, emphasizing the importance of digital innovation for sustainable development and the need for transformative action to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

During the opening ceremony, various dignitaries provided welcoming remarks, setting the stage for the key themes and discussions that would follow throughout the session. The focus on digital innovation highlighted the potential for technology to drive inclusive growth, improve energy access, and mitigate climate change's impacts.

Election of Officers

Following the opening ceremony, the election of officers took place. Her Excellency Miss Batum Batmunk, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, was elected as chair of the 80th session, along with seven vice-chairs from various countries. In her acceptance speech, Miss Batum Batmunk outlined her vision for the session and highlighted the challenges facing the region, such as climate change, rising inequality, and the digital divide.

Key Themes and Discussions

The session focused on several key themes related to sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. These included:

- **Climate Action**: The session emphasized the urgency of addressing climate change, with resolutions aimed at strengthening climate resilience and developing regional strategies for disaster risk reduction and early warning systems.

- **Energy Access**: Discussions centered on ensuring affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy sources for all. This involved exploring innovative energy technologies and

promoting renewable energy sources to support economic growth and poverty reduction.

- **Population and Development**: The session contributed to the global review of the status of the International Conference on Population and Development's program of action. It focused on gender equality, inclusive growth, and addressing population-related challenges in the region.

- **Public Debt Sustainability**: Discussions highlighted the importance of ensuring long-term public debt sustainability, particularly in the context of investments in climate action and the SDGs. The session explored strategies for balancing public debt with sustainable development goals.

Speeches by High-Level Dignitaries

Several high-level dignitaries delivered speeches during the session, providing insights into their countries' experiences and perspectives on sustainable development:

- **Prime Minister of Thailand**: In his address, the Prime Minister outlined two key approaches to leverage digital innovation: empowering people through digital transformation and addressing risks associated with technology, such as cybersecurity and the digital divide.

- **Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina**: She highlighted Bangladesh's progress in economic growth and gender equality, despite global challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. Sheikh Hasina also discussed the importance of regional cooperation and collective action to overcome these challenges.

- **Prime Minister of Cambodia, Hun Manet**: Hun Manet emphasized digital technology as a crucial driver of socioeconomic development. He outlined Cambodia's national strategies to promote digital economy and society, along with initiatives to bridge the digital gap and promote cybersecurity.

- **President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr**.: Marcos emphasized the Philippines' commitment to leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development. He highlighted the country's progress in digital transformation and outlined future plans for economic growth and sustainability.

- **Murat Nurtleu of Kazakhstan**: Nurtleu discussed Kazakhstan's progress in digitalization and the country's focus on becoming a technologicalpowerhouse. He emphasized the importance of sharing expertise with neighboring countries to foster regional cooperation.

Thematic Roundtables

The session included high-level thematic roundtables that provided a platform for in- depth discussions on socio-economic outlook, emerging challenges, and solutions. Key points discussed during these roundtables included:

- **Socio-economic Challenges**: The Asia-Pacific region faces numerous challenges, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and global conflicts. These challenges have slowed progress toward the SDGs and increased poverty and inequality. The roundtables explored how digital innovation can help address these issues.

- **Climate Resilience and Adaptation**: The roundtables focused on the importance of climate-resilient social protection systems and green job creation to build a more inclusive and sustainable economy. Discussions highlighted innovative approaches to climate action and the need for regional cooperation to address climate-related risks.

- **Reforms in Multilateral Development Banks**: Discussions centered on the need for reforms in multilateral development banks to better integrate development and climate agendas. The focus was on unlocking new funding for developing member countries and promoting gender equality and basic needs.

Policy Recommendations and Solutions

Throughout the session, various policy recommendations and solutions emerged, focusing on the role of digital innovation in achieving sustainable development. Key policy recommendations included:

- **Closing the Digital Divide**: Addressing the digital divide requires enhanced digital literacy, expanded internet access, and public-private partnerships to ensure equitable access to technology.

- **Promoting Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development**: The session emphasized the need to ensure that digital innovation is inclusive and benefits all sections of society. This involves addressing issues like data privacy and cybersecurity while fostering collaboration between public and private sectors.

- **Climate Resilience**: Strengthening climate-resilient infrastructure and promoting green technologies were identified as critical steps to mitigate climate-related risks. The need for regional cooperation and strategic partnerships to address climate change was emphasized.

- **Agricultural Transformation**: Discussions on agricultural transformation highlighted the importance of supporting smallholder farmers and promoting sustainable agricultural

practices. Policy recommendations focused on technology transfer, capacity building, and promoting climate-resilient agriculture.

- **Fiscal Resource Mobilization**: The session addressed strategies to mobilize fiscal resources while managing public debt to support sustainable development goals. This included exploring innovative financing mechanisms and public-private partnerships.

Closing Remarks and Future Directions

The closing remarks summarized the key themes and outcomes of the session, emphasizing the importance of regional cooperation and collective action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Delegates expressed their commitment to advancing sustainable development through digital innovation and encouraged ongoing collaboration among ESCAP member states.

The session concluded with a call to action for all stakeholders to embrace digital innovation and strengthen regional partnerships to address the unique challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region. By focusing on inclusive digital transformation and promoting climate resilience, the region can accelerate progress toward achieving the SDGs and create a more sustainable future for all.

Conclusion

The 80th session of ESCAP highlighted the critical role of digital innovation in driving sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. It underscored the need for collective action, strategic policy implementation, and a renewed focus on addressing the digital divide and climate-related risks. By fostering regional cooperation and leveraging emerging digital technologies, ESCAP member states can work toward a more inclusive and sustainable future, achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Afternoon Plenary (Day 1)
Agenda item 2 Theme topic: "Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific"
General Debate

1. Introduction and Context

The 80th Commission Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was held from April 22 to 26, 2024, at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. The session was guided by the theme "Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific." The primary goal was to explore how digital technologies can be harnessed to accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and address regional challenges. The session aimed to facilitate cooperation among governments, private sector stakeholders, and international organizations.

1.1. Session Theme and Objectives

The focus on digital innovation was driven by the need to find solutions for global challenges such as climate change, poverty, inequality, and the digital divide. The session brought together key stakeholders to discuss strategic policy actions, successful case studies, and opportunities for regional cooperation.

2. Opening Remarks and Keynote Address

The Afternoon Plenary of Day 1 began with opening remarks from key speakers, followed by a video message from Mr. Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and founder of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. Mr. Blair's message emphasized the transformative role of digital technologies in achieving sustainable development goals. His remarks set the stage for the session's discussions, focusing on the strategic importance of digital innovation in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

2.1. Key Points from the Opening Remarks

- Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development: Mr. Blair highlighted how digital technologies can drive innovation across various sectors, including healthcare, education, and government services.
- Government Involvement: He stressed the need for governments to play an active role in creating an enabling environment for digital innovation. This involves fostering partnerships, implementing supportive policies, and addressing challenges such as cybersecurity threats.
- Collaboration and Cooperation: Mr. Blair underscored the importance of collaboration between governments, private sector stakeholders, and international organizations to promote digital inclusion and ensure equitable access to technology.

3. Thematic Roundtable on Digital Innovations for Achieving the SDGs

Following the opening remarks, the session moved into a thematic roundtable focusing on digital innovations for achieving the SDGs. The roundtable provided a platform for panelists from various sectors to discuss the importance of digital innovation, share success stories, and explore challenges and solutions.

3.1. Importance of Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development

The roundtable emphasized the critical role of digital innovations in achieving the SDGs. Panelists discussed how digital technologies can drive economic growth, promote social inclusion, and support environmental sustainability. Key topics covered included:

- **Economic Growth**: Digital innovation can boost productivity, create jobs, and open new business opportunities.

- **Social Inclusion**: Technology can improve access to education, healthcare, and other essential services, reducing inequalities.

- **Environmental Sustainability**: Digital solutions can support climate action, enhance disaster resilience, and promote sustainable resource management.

3.2. Case Studies and Success Stories

Various speakers shared case studies and success stories to illustrate how digital innovations have made a significant impact on sustainable development. Some examples discussed during the roundtable included:

- **Education**: Digital platforms that provide access to educational resources and online learning opportunities, especially in remote or underserved areas.

- **Healthcare**: The use of telemedicine and digital health records to improve healthcare access and quality.

- **Disaster Resilience**: Digital technologies that support early warning systems and disaster response efforts, enhancing community resilience.

3.3. Challenges and Solutions

The roundtable addressed the challenges associated with digital innovation and discussed potential solutions to create an enabling environment for sustainable development. Key challenges and proposed solutions included:

- **Digital Divide**: Unequal access to technology and digital resources remains a significant barrier. Strategies to bridge the digital divide included expanding internet connectivity,

promoting digital literacy, and ensuring affordability.

- **Cybersecurity Threats**: As technology becomes more integrated into daily life, cybersecurity risks increase. Panelists discussed policy solutions, regulatory reforms, and capacity-building programs to address these threats.

- **Capacity Development**: Developing the skills and competencies needed to harness digital technologies effectively is crucial. The roundtable emphasized the importance of capacity development and digital skills training to ensure that everyone can benefit from digital innovation.

3.4. Collaboration and Partnerships

The importance of collaboration and partnerships was a central theme during the roundtable. Speakers highlighted the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration, including governments, private sector stakeholders, academia, and civil society. Successful examples of collaboration discussed during the roundtable included:

- **Public-Private Partnerships**: Governments working with private sector companies to develop and implement digital solutions for public services, infrastructure, and economic development.

- **International Cooperation**: Collaboration among ESCAP member states to share best practices, knowledge, and resources for advancing digital innovation.

Community Engagement: Involving local communities in the design and implementation of digital initiatives to ensure they meet the needs of diverse populations.

4. Country-Specific Discussions and Initiatives

Throughout the plenary session, various countries presented their efforts and initiatives to leverage digital innovations for sustainable development. This section summarizes key points from these discussions.

4.1. The Philippines

The delegate from the Philippines discussed the country's commitment to advancing sustainable development, focusing on bridging the digital divide. Key initiatives included:

- **eGov PH App and National Broadband Program**: Aiming to improve connectivity and promote transparency in governance through technology.

- **Cybersecurity**: The importance of addressing cybersecurity threats and ensuring data privacy.

- **Digital Skills Development**: Plans to foster innovation and entrepreneurship.

4.2. Russian Federation

The Russian Federation expressed support for advancing digital innovation but did not provide detailed insights into their country's specific efforts. The representative highlighted the importance of collaborating with other ESCAP member states to promote digital innovation.

4.3. Bangladesh

His Excellency Mr. Abu Hassan Mahmud Ali, Minister of Finance of Bangladesh, shared Bangladesh's achievements under the Digital Bangladesh Vision and proposed financing modalities to scale up digital innovations. He highlighted:

- **Digital Bangladesh Vision**: Bangladesh's progress in digital transformation in education, healthcare, and e-government.

- **Financing Modalities**: Strategies for financing digital innovation through international cooperation and public-private partnerships.

- **Challenges and Solutions**: Addressing the digital divide and implementing capacity-building programs.

4.4. Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan delegate emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in leveraging digital technologies to achieve sustainable development goals. Sri Lanka's key points included:

- **Regional Hubs for Knowledge Sharing**: Establishing mentorship programs and funding mechanisms to support digital innovation.

- **Inclusivity**: Ensuring inclusivity in digital solutions, especially for developing countries.

- **Digital Transformation**: National initiatives to promote digital transformation and improve access to technology.

4.5. Iran

Iran's delegate outlined the country's efforts in developing a National Information Network and expanding digital infrastructure. Iran's key points included:

- **Education and Research**: Promoting digital literacy and fostering innovation.

- **E-Government Services**: Iran's initiatives to promote e-government and improve public service efficiency.

- **International Cooperation**: Iran's support for regional cooperation in advancing the digital economy and achieving sustainable development goals.

4.6. Lao PDR

The delegate from Lao PDR presented the National Digital Economic Development Vision and Plan, focusing on leveraging digital technologies for economic growth and social progress. Lao PDR's key points included:

- **Digital Transformation Strategy**: Strategies for promoting digital innovation and supporting sustainable development.

- **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)**: Addressing challenges unique to LDCs, with support from international organizations.

- **Regional Cooperation**: Lao PDR's commitment to collaborating with other ESCAP member states to promote digital innovation.

4.7. Turkmenistan

The Turkmenistan delegate shared initiatives to promote online sharing and collaboration. Although the statements were brief, they indicated Turkmenistan's commitment to digital innovation.

4.8. Papua New Guinea

The delegate from Papua New Guinea discussed challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and outlined the country's strategic partnerships for bridging the digital divide. Papua New Guinea's key points included:

- **Digital Infrastructure**: Efforts to improve digital infrastructure and promote digital literacy.
- **National Development Plan**: Incorporating sustainable development goals into the national development plan.
- **Strategic Partnerships**: Partnerships to bridge the digital divide and foster digital innovation.

4.9. Samoa

The delegate from Samoa acknowledged the importance of digital innovation for sustainable development, especially for small island developing states (SIDS). Samoa's key points included:

- **International Cooperation**: The need for international partnerships to ensure no one is left behind in the digital transformation process.

- **Climate Action and Disaster Resilience**: The role of digital technologies in supporting climate action and enhancing disaster resilience.

- **Inclusive Development**: Emphasizing inclusivity in digital innovation to ensure equitable access to technology.

4.10. Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan highlighted their national efforts to promote e-government and digital transformation. Key points from Uzbekistan's presentation included:

- **E-Commerce and Economic Growth**: The use of digital technologies to support economic growth through e-commerce.

- **International Collaboration**: Emphasizing the importance of international collaboration to share best practices and foster digital innovation.

- **Digital Transformation Initiatives**: Uzbekistan's focus on promoting e- government and improving internet accessibility to support sustainable development.

4.11. Pakistan

Pakistan's representative discussed the growth of digital technology in governance and the economy. Key points from Pakistan's presentation included:

- **National Initiatives**: Initiatives to promote digital transformation and achieve sustainable development goals.

- **International Cooperation**: Emphasizing the importance of international cooperation and experience-sharing for digital inclusion and sustainable development.

- **Digital Infrastructure**: Pakistan's efforts to improve digital infrastructure and promote digital literacy to support economic growth.

4.12. India

India's representative highlighted the transformative potential of digital innovation for sustainable development. India's key points included:

- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**: Initiatives like Aadhaar for biometric identity verification and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for real-time payments.

- **Healthcare, Education, and Disaster Management**: India's use of digital technologies to improve healthcare access, education quality, and disaster management.
- **Commitment to Knowledge Sharing**: India's commitment to sharing experiences and expertise with other countries to promote digital innovation.

4.13. Turkey

Turkey's representative emphasized the crucial role of digital innovation in sustainable development. Turkey's key points included:

- **Digital Governance**: Turkey's efforts to provide government services online and promote digital governance for transparency and efficiency.

- **International Cooperation**: The importance of international cooperation to promote innovation and equitable access to digital benefits.

- **Bridging the Digital Divide**: Turkey's commitment to addressing the digital divide and investing in digital literacy and infrastructure.

4.14. Georgia

Georgia's representative emphasized their country's commitment to sustainable development through progress and innovation. Georgia's key points included:

- **Knowledge-Based Innovation**: Georgia's focus on private sector-oriented economic development and digitalization of governance and public services.

- **Startup Ecosystem**: Georgia's investment in building a vibrant startup ecosystem and attracting international IT companies through flexible tax regimes and supportive policies.

- **International Collaboration**: Georgia's support for EU principles and projects like the Black Sea Submarine Cable to enhance connectivity.

4.15. Hong Kong

The Director of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Bangkok emphasized Hong Kong's commitment to digital innovations, especially in digital finance, technologies, government technology, and the Internet of Things (IoT). Hong Kong also highlighted its focus on green finance and sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of integrating green practices into digital solutions.

5. Additional Contributions from Delegates and Representatives

Other delegates and representatives shared their insights on digital innovation for sustainable development, highlighting initiatives from their respective organizations. This section outlines some key contributions.

5.1. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The IAEA Deputy Director General emphasized the agency's commitment to leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development. They discussed the transformative role of digital technologies in enhancing nuclear safety, security, and applications in healthcare, agriculture, and environmental protection.

5.2. Eurasian Development Bank

Mr. Denis Illen, Senior Managing Director of the Eurasian Development Bank, highlighted the bank's focus on infrastructure projects, digital technology, and reducing the digital gap across member countries. He discussed the significance of digitalization in public governance, labor markets, smart cities, and data circulation.
Mr. Illen also mentioned the establishment of a fund for digital initiatives to support member countries in their digital transformation efforts.

5.3. United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)

Mr. Jonathan Hilman, representing UNEP, outlined key areas where digital technologies can accelerate environmental sustainability:

- **Supply Chain Transparency**: Digital technologies like Earth observation and artificial intelligence can provide accurate and real-time data for sustainable supply chains.

- **Aligning Capital with Sustainability**: Integrating environmental and climate considerations into financial markets to facilitate low-carbon portfolios and combat greenwashing.

- **Influencing Consumer Choices**: Leveraging e-commerce platforms and social media to promote sustainability as the preferred choice for consumers.

- Mr. Hilman concluded by highlighting the Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability (CODES), which aims to prioritize the application of digital technologies to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

5.4. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

Miss Katherine Clarkson, representing IFRC for Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, underscored the importance of leveraging digital innovation for disaster risk reduction and humanitarian assistance. She highlighted key areas where digital transformation can play a crucial role in providing efficient humanitarian services, including drones for relief supply delivery and biometrics for health services. Miss Clarkson emphasized the need to bridge the digital divide to reach vulnerable communities more effectively.

5.5. Sopimus International

Miss Teresa Devasahayam, from Sopimus International, emphasized the importance of digitalization in driving economic growth, resource optimization, and access to services. She highlighted a project in the Philippines focused on providing education and digital access to empower girls from lower-income families, addressing affordability issues and closing the gender gap in the skilled labor force.

5.6. Muslim World League

Mr. Raman Muhammad Amin Al-Kayat, the Director of the Muslim World League office in Indonesia, emphasized the significance of digital innovation in business models. He highlighted examples of initiatives by the Muslim World League, such as a project in Somalia focused on rehabilitation and agriculture water channels, using digital innovation tools. Mr. Al-Kayat expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the session and underscored the potential of digital innovation to enhance the effectiveness of projects and achieve greater benefits.

5.7. ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

Mr. George Lamb, Chair of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network, delivered a video message emphasizing the commitment of businesses in the Asia-Pacific region to sustainable development. He highlighted the importance of working together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change. Mr. Lamb outlined the five pillars of the Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business and stressed the importance of green finance, climate-resilient cities, and green innovation. He also emphasized the need for investment in smarter and greener solutions, leveraging green finance, and digital technology developments.

6. Conclusion and Key Takeaways

The afternoon plenary of Day 1 at the 80th ESCAP Session provided valuable insights into the role of digital innovation in achieving sustainable development goals. The session emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and multi- stakeholder collaboration to harness the potential of digital technologies for positive impact.

6.1. Key Takeaways

Key takeaways from the session include:

- **Digital Innovation as a Driver of Sustainable Development**: Digital technologies offer significant potential for addressing global challenges and achieving the SDGs.

- **Collaboration and Partnerships**: Multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential for accelerating progress toward sustainable development goals.

- **Addressing Challenges**: While digital innovation provides substantial benefits, it also poses challenges, such as the digital divide, cybersecurity threats, and capacity development. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive policy solutions and regulatory reforms.

6.2. Closing Remarks and Future Directions

The closing remarks summarized the key themes and outcomes of the session, highlighting the importance of regional cooperation and international partnerships. Delegates expressed their commitment to advancing sustainable development through digital innovation and encouraged ongoing collaboration among ESCAP member states. They stressed the need for continuous efforts to promote equitable access to technology and ensure that digital innovation benefits all segments of society.

Overall, the afternoon plenary of Day 1 at the 80th ESCAP Session underscored the significance of digital innovation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the need for collaborative efforts to bridge the digital divide, foster innovation, and create an inclusive and sustainable future.

Bangladesh's Side Event at the 80th ESCAP Session:

"Smart Innovation for Sustainable Development: Perspectives from Bangladesh and the Asia-Pacific Region"

1. Overview and Background

Bangladesh, recognized as a leader in digital innovation within the global South, hosted a significant side event during the 80th session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The event,
 titled "Smart Innovation for Sustainable Development: Perspectives from Bangladesh and the Asia-Pacific Region," aimed to highlight the role of digital innovation in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Jointly organized by Bangladesh's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Division and the Embassy of Bangladesh in Bangkok, this hybrid event brought together a diverse audience of government officials, policymakers, experts, and other stakeholders.

2. Focus and Objectives

The central theme of the side event was Bangladesh's journey in digital innovation, from the "Digital Bangladesh" initiative to the "Smart Bangladesh" vision. The event emphasized how digital technologies could drive progress toward achieving the SDGs, focusing on inclusivity, reducing the digital divide, and promoting sustainable development. Participants discussed the transformative potential of digital technologies and the need for regional cooperation among the Asia-Pacific countries.

3. Welcome Speech and Opening Remarks

The event began with a welcome speech by Mohammad Abdul Hye, the Ambassador of Bangladesh to Thailand. He welcomed participants and set the stage for the discussions, emphasizing Bangladesh's commitment to sharing its experience and knowledge in digital innovation with the global South. He underscored the importance of international cooperation in achieving the SDGs.
The opening remarks were given by H.E. Abul Hasan Mahmud Ali, the Finance Minister of Bangladesh, and H.E. Zunaid Ahmed Palak, State Minister for Posts, Telecommunications, and Information Technology. Minister Mahmud Ali highlighted Bangladesh's journey in digital innovation and its impact on achieving the SDGs. He discussed Bangladesh's "Smart Bangladesh" vision and its focus on creating an inclusive, knowledge-based, sustainable society by 2041.
State Minister Palak reflected on Bangladesh's rapid digital transformation under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He noted that the success of "Digital Bangladesh" paved the way for the "Smart Bangladesh" initiative, which focuses on four key pillars: Smart Citizen, Smart Economy, Smart Government, and Smart Society. He mentioned that 2 million jobs had

been created in the IT/ITES sector, with about 700,000 IT freelancers, contributing to $2 billion in export earnings.

4. Keynote Presentation and Panel Discussion

The keynote presentation was delivered by Mr. Anir Chowdhury, Policy Advisor at Aspire to Innovate (a2i). He discussed the transition from "Digital Bangladesh" to "Smart Bangladesh," emphasizing the role of digital innovation in achieving sustainable development. Mr. Chowdhury highlighted the impact of digital technology on various sectors, including governance, healthcare, education, and business, and discussed the need for strategic partnerships to further advance the SDGs.

The event featured a panel discussion with experts from Bangladesh and the Asia- Pacific region, focusing on the role of digital innovation in addressing key challenges related to achieving the SDGs. The panelists shared insights, best practices, and strategies for leveraging digital technologies to drive sustainable development. The panelists were:

- Mr. Hur Sanwok, President of Korea's National IT Industry Promotion Agency.

- Dr. Ramesh Chandra Paudel, Member of Nepal's National Planning Commission.

- Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Regional Director of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

- Mr. Adnan Aliani, Director of Strategy and Program Management Division at UN ESCAP.

- Mr. Kendrick Yonghao Chan, Senior Policy Analyst at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.

- Mr. Gerd Trojemann, Manager of Regional Programs at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

  The discussion centered on the transformative potential of digital technologies in advancing sustainable development. Panelists discussed how digital innovation can bridge the digital divide, promote economic growth, and support social inclusion. They also addressed the importance of collaboration and partnerships in achieving the SDGs.

5. Discussion and Key Points

Throughout the event, several key points and themes emerged, reflecting Bangladesh's role in digital innovation and the broader Asia-Pacific region's efforts to promote sustainable development through technology:

- Smart Bangladesh Vision: The "Smart Bangladesh" vision, targeting 2041, focuses on creating an inclusive, knowledge-based, and sustainable society. This vision builds on the success of the "Digital Bangladesh" initiative and emphasizes four key pillars: Smart Citizen, Smart Economy, Smart Government, and Smart Society.

- Digital Transformation in Bangladesh: Bangladesh's rapid digital transformation has led to significant achievements, including the creation of 2 million jobs in the IT/ITES sector, with about 700,000 IT freelancers contributing to $2 billion in export earnings.

- Collaboration and Partnerships: The need for multi-stakeholder collaboration and international cooperation to promote digital innovation and achieve the SDGs was emphasized. Bangladesh's commitment to sharing its experiences and technology with the global South was a recurring theme.

- Knowledge Sharing and Technology Transfer: The event highlighted Bangladesh's commitment to sharing knowledge and technology with other countries, emphasizing the importance of collective progress toward achieving the SDGs.

6. Closing Remarks and Conclusion

The closing remarks were given by Md. Shahriar Quader Siddiqui, Secretary of the Economic Relations Department, who emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in advancing digital innovation. He highlighted Bangladesh's commitment to promoting sustainable development through technology and encouraged ongoing collaboration among the Asia-Pacific countries.

Overall, the side event provided valuable insights into Bangladesh's journey in digital innovation and its role as a leader in the global South. The discussions emphasized the transformative potential of digital technologies and the need for regional cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The interactive Smart Bangladesh Pavilion illustrated Bangladesh's transition from its "Digital Bangladesh" program to its "Smart Bangladesh" vision, providing the global audience with a comprehensive overview of the country's progress toward becoming a smart nation.

Bangladesh's commitment to sharing its experiences with other developing nations and promoting digital innovation for sustainable development was a key takeaway from the event. The country's success in digital transformation serves as a model for other nations seeking to harness technology to drive progress toward the SDGs and create a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Morning Plenary (Day 2)
Agenda item 2 Theme topic: "Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific"
High-level thematic roundtable on: Digital innovations for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Day two of the 80th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific kickstarted with the high-level thematic roundtable on "Digital innovations for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals". Ms. Dhra Dhirakaosal, TV News Anchor, NHK World and National Broadcasting Services of Thailand was the moderator of this session. The high level round table discusses strategic policy actions undertaken by governments and other actors to leverage digital innovation for acceleration to the achievement of sustainable goals.

The session opened with a video from **Mr. Tony Blair, Executive Chairman**, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change and Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. He stressed on the importance of AI which has become a focal part of the technological revolution. It has many benefits from driving down cost to improving efficiencies and more. Ai has been prominent in the private sector but the government sector should take on its developments too as it can transform benefits for civilians. There needs to be a huge revolution with enormous implications. He further talks about the Asia Pacific regions seeing strong growth in technology enhancements. He gave examples of collaborations with Indonesian leaders to help create high income status within 2045,through attracting investments and healthcare reform while also redefining the nation's technology and industrialization. Similar strategies were implemented with his collaboration with the Vietnamese government to attract more foreign investments. He emphasized that the most important thing is that " the government needs to know how to harness the opportunity and medicate risks". This forum provides an excellent platform to come together to celebrate the achievements and discuss challenges and develop lasting policy solutions that deliver.

The next speaker was **H.E. Mr. Airlangga Hartarto**, Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, Indonesia, who joined via zoom. Indonesia has set out a goal to become a high income developed country by 2045 with the goal of ranking as the world's 5th largest economy with Sustainable development goals as a crucial part of their actions. Minister Hartarto started off his remarks by acknowledging how the pandemic has allowed technology to become a game changer, when there were restrictions and barriers, technology was what made connections possible. This fostered developments in the health sector, government and employment sectors. Indonesia is determined to achieve the golden 2045 Vision, which requires a transformative approach in the economic development through increasing technology, information and productivity, formation of the green economy, digital transformation, domestic economic integration and creating urban areas for the next economic approach. Minister Hartarto highlighted Indonesia's ambitious digital transformation agenda, which aims to harness the power of technology to address pressing development challenges and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He underscored the government's efforts to promote digital literacy, expand broadband infrastructure, and foster a conducive environment

for innovation and entrepreneurship.He emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships in driving digital innovation and achieving sustainable development outcomes. He highlighted collaborative initiatives between the government, private sector, and civil society to deploy innovative solutions and digital tools in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture, and environmental conservation. He also stressed on the need for robust regulatory frameworks to safeguard personal data, enhance cybersecurity, and build trust in digital technologies. He highlighted Indonesia's efforts to develop comprehensive data protection laws and regulatory mechanisms to address emerging challenges related to data governance while reaffirming Indonesia's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Up next was **H.E. Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali**, MP, Honorable Minister of Finance, Bangladesh who attended in person. Digital innovation plays a vital role in advancing the sustainable development goals.In the face of adversity, Bangladesh was able to successfully implement many technological advancements. First and foremost, digital innovation has revolutionized access to education through internet connections and mobile phones reaching marginalized people. Students were able to study online and have access to digital labs, closing the gap of people in urban and rural areas. This assured that no one was left behind. Government officials also benefited from access to the internet as well through optical fibers. Over 5 million teachers were connected in the online world. Another vital industry was healthcare, where telemedicine allowed remote and underserved areas to have access to online consultations. This reduced the need for physical doctor's visits and reduce inequality. Over 4000 private and 11,000 public health providers connected to the mass population. Vaccine management systems were developed to ensure vaccination through the help of online systems. Another crucial industry was banking, where mobile banking became accessible to millions of unbanked people, allowing them to save up money and also start investing. Amongst all the benefits on the other side,cyber security threats and privacy concerns are the downside that comes with this digital transformation. However international collaboration in advancing the digital transformation is primal as team effort would allow us to tackle concerning issues and improve efficiency.

The speaker that followed was, **H.E. Mr. Askar Zhambakin**, Vice-Minister of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan who attended in-person. The journey of digital innovation started in 2003 with the opening of citizenship centers.In 2006, all government services were moved to the online portal and by 2020, over 90% of all government services were available online with 80% also available on mobile phones. Biometric identification allowed the Kazakhstan government to easily enroll people into mobile applications including online banking. This allowed over 86% of retail transactions to be cashless. The digital framework of the country runs on 4 dimensions; data, technology, people and processes. For the dimension of processes, the government has established a digital transformation center 3 years ago, putting together government functions and business processes.Utilizing how technology can be used to improve efficiency, to reach the goal of the desired process - technology driven transformation of the public sector. For the dimension of data, more than 90 databases have been integrated. One of their projects was about "scoring family well being" , where they group citizens into family and then families into social well being

status to find out how many families were in which status. This project won the first prize in digital inclusivity in a Government Summit. For the dimension of people, there is a special course for the public administration that teaches public sector employees how to engineer business processes, understand the architecture of information systems and what is data and so on. For the dimension of technology,the cloud storage system was implemented last year and open sourced products have been introduced to automate and digitalize processes within the government.

Ms. Ko Barrett, Deputy Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) was next to give her remarks. The work done within WMO is of huge economic and social importance. Driving the full cycle from science to services to actions for the good of the society. Together they advance knowledge of the earth system and monitor climate changes to provide information on greenhouse emissions and climate services and early warnings. WMO contributes to the SDG goal 13 on climate action by providing decision makers with periodic assessments of the state of the climate to help countries to medicate climate change and adapt to its impact. The vast majority of disasters are caused by hydrological hazards. The long term warming trend is accelerating and adverse extreme weather and climate events are increasing. Therefore, it is imperative that we all are protected and prepared. No agency can work in isolation amidst all the challenges to provide people centered, end to end , multi hazards warning systems to leave no one behind. These warning systems save lives and can have a return on investment up to 10 fold. However, the effectiveness and precision of the system relies on the digital transformation which also allows for the spread of this technology in more countries.

The final speaker was **Ms. Xirui Lian**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Lvdoya,from China, who also attended in person . Lvdoya has pioneered the "garbage sorting carbon neutrality cabin" (referred to as "carbon cabin") with over 100,000 citizens(70% being women) using the cabin daily, recycling trash which reflects on the SDG goals of 4-5 -9 -11-12-13. They were able to integrate people in the community to the circular economy. Two thousand tons of carbon emission has been reduced since the project has launched and a high number of trash has been recycled. The technology is very easy to use with only three steps; access to a mobile phone, scan the carbon footprint utility at the cabin and follow the prompts on the screen to see how much of their waste has been recycled along with how much glass emission has been reduced and they will receive cash in real time. Now they are in the process of expanding the region where carbon cabins can be implemented. She concluded with the 5 factors of success for startups like hers ; innovate for accessibility, bridge the education gap, strengthen community ties, build trust through technology and foster multi stakeholder collaboration.

After the panelists had made their remarks, the first intervention was called upon by the **Ivan John E.Uy** Secretary, Department of Information and Communications, Technology ,Philippines. The Philippines is committed to sustainable development, guided by the UN's goals. Despite challenges like the digital divide, the country prioritizes sustainability. Marginalized groups face connectivity issues, but initiatives like applications and broadband programs aim to bridge the gap. President Ferdinand Marcos Junior's leadership fosters dedication to achieving the 2030

SDGs. The recent application launch has benefited over 2 million users, while the broadband program aims for widespread connectivity, laying the groundwork for a fairer society.

The second half of the morning session consisted of the " General debate Country statements".

1.H.E. Dr. Davood Manzoor,
 Vice-President and Head of Plan and Budget Organization of The Islamic Republic of Iran
His Excellency Dr. Davood Manzoor expressed gratitude to Madam Alisjahbana for her leadership in advancing sustainable development and for organizing the meeting. He highlighted Iran's efforts to establish a national information network, aiming to cover the entire country with high-quality services, including expanding fiber optic coverage to 20 million households in 1.5 years. Dr. Manzoor noted Iran's digital economy's current market share of 7.5% of GDP, with plans to double it under the upcoming national development plan. He emphasized the importance of lifelong learning in the digital era and outlined Iran's initiatives in education, research, and development. Manzoor also discussed the use of local digital platforms and the launch of Iran's national E-Government platform, along with efforts to promote digital governance and a smart government through online authentication and data management laws. He proposed that the working group on digital economy under UN-ESCAP's leadership play a more efficient role in encouraging investment, developing digital infrastructure, supporting small and medium-sized businesses, fostering cooperation, promoting human rights in cyberspace, and enhancing regional digital markets among member countries.

2.H.E. Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith,
Deputy Prime Minister Minister of Foreign Affairs Head of Delegation of the Lao PDR
H.E. Mr. Saleumxay KOMMASITH delivered a national statement on leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. He emphasized digitalization as crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development but noted a significant digital divide among countries. The Lao PDR has initiated comprehensive digital economic development plans to harness digital technologies for economic growth and social progress, aiming to graduate from its LDC status by 2026. The country collaborates with the UN Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries and supports the ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025 to accelerate digital integration in the region. H.E. Kommasith urged the international community to support countries with special needs to bridge the digital divide for inclusive development. He reaffirmed the Lao PDR's commitment to fostering collaboration and achieving impactful outcomes through digital innovation for sustainable development.H.E. Kommasith highlighted the transformative potential of digital innovation across various sectors and underscored the importance of addressing barriers such as limited infrastructure, digital literacy, and affordability to ensure inclusive development. The Lao PDR's digital economic development vision spanning 20 years demonstrates its commitment to leveraging digital technologies for economic growth and social progress. Through collaborations with international organizations and regional initiatives like the ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025, the country aims to accelerate digital integration and enhance connectivity in the region. H.E. Kommasith emphasized the need for collective efforts to bridge the digital divide and unlock potential for sustainable growth, reaffirming the Lao PDR's readiness to cooperate with all stakeholders in this endeavor.

4. H.E. Mr. Muhammetnyyaz Mashalov,
Ambassador of Turkmenistan in Malaysia and Permanent Representative to ESCAP
H.E. Mr. Muhammetnyyaz Mashalov expressed gratitude to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for inviting him to the 80th anniversary session and commended the session's organization. He highlighted the significance of digital innovations for sustainable development, emphasizing their role in shaping modern socio-economic landscapes through initiatives like the sharing economy and innovative technologies. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of digitization for mobility expansion and development, reinforcing the crucial role of digital technologies in fostering sustainable growth.

Mashalov outlined Turkmenistan's strides in digital transformation, detailing the establishment of legal frameworks and infrastructure to support digitization across various sectors. Initiatives include the implementation of non-cash payment systems, advancement in industrial automation, and the creation of digital commerce platforms. Efforts also extend to enhancing public services through electronic systems like the "Electronic Tax" system and the Unified Portal of State Services. Furthermore, projects in telecommunications aim to improve communication infrastructure and internet access nationwide, including in remote areas. Mashalov stressed the importance of fostering digital literacy among citizens to effectively leverage digital technologies for economic growth, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals. He concluded by advocating for increased integration of digital innovations into national development agendas to drive sustainable progress in the Asia-Pacific region.

5.Mr.Koney Samuel,
Secretary, Department of National Planning and Monitoring of Papua New Guinea
Mr. Koney Samuel, representing Papua New Guinea, highlights the potential of the Asia-Pacific region to harness innovative solutions and digital technologies for economic and social development. While acknowledging the transformative impact of digital technologies, particularly in education, health, and e-commerce, he notes the slow progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Samuel emphasizes the need for collective regional efforts to capitalize on digital innovations to accelerate SDG progress, citing the region's significant population and GDP share. He underscores the importance of multilateral partnerships in sharing technological advancements and addressing the challenges and opportunities brought by the pandemic. Samuel calls for strategic alliances to bridge financing gaps for vulnerable states and urges commitment to fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6. H.E.Aliioaiga Feturi ELISAIA
Samoa's High Commissioner to Fiji
H.E. Aliioaiga Feturi of Samoa expresses gratitude to the Royal Thai Government and ESCAP for hosting and facilitating the 80th Commission session, enabling diverse Asian and Pacific nations to collaborate on addressing common challenges and sharing solutions. Emphasizing the value of ESCAP membership for learning from peers and regional partners, Feturi highlights Samoa's unique challenges as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), including geographical

isolation, limited infrastructure, and climate vulnerability. He underscores the importance of ethical and smart utilization of digital technology, supported by genuine partnerships, to foster sustainable development and bridge the digital divide in Samoa. Feturi outlines Samoa's digital initiatives and their alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts and international partnerships to overcome obstacles and ensure a well-connected future. He concludes by affirming Samoa's commitment to cybersecurity and aligning digital policies with the Pacific region's long-term strategy for technology and connectivity.

7.Mr.Anvar Mansurov,

Director of E-Government Projects, Single Integrator UZINFOCOM
In his address to the 80th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Mansurov highlights Uzbekistan's commitment to digital innovation as a cornerstone of global development, emphasizing its alignment with the "Uzbekistan 2030" Strategy, spearheaded by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. With a focus on elevating the nation's digital economy, Uzbekistan aims to rank among the top 30 in the UN's e-government index, increase IT services exports to $5 billion, and train 300,000 specialists by 2030. Mansurov outlines innovative projects transforming state governance and public services, including the Unified Portal for seamless access to government services, interdepartmental electronic interaction, and enhanced citizen information platforms. He underscores Uzbekistan's strides in integrating advanced technologies like biometric identification systems such as MyID and "Mukhlisa" Voice Assistant, along with the pioneering MyID Palm vein pattern recognition system. Mansurov concludes by advocating for collaborative efforts, knowledge exchange, and standardization to realize a digital future, wishing participants productive discussions and endeavors.

8.Mr.Yasir Hussain,

Charge d'Affaires and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to ESCAP
Mr. Yasir Hussain, in his address talks about Pakistan's remarkable progress in digital advancement, propelled by enhanced mobile and internet infrastructure. He highlights the transformative impact of affordable smartphones, facilitating internet accessibility even in underserved areas, and fostering a burgeoning e-commerce landscape led by platforms like Daraz and Alibaba. Moreover, he emphasizes the role of mobile-wallet services like Jazzcash and Easypaisa in fostering financial inclusion and enabling online transactions, including government payments. Hussain articulates Pakistan's strategic initiatives, such as the National Digital Transformation Initiative and the UPSIGN network, aimed at harnessing digital technology to address societal challenges and advance sustainable development goals (SDGs). He cites examples like the Smart Villages initiative, focused on connecting remote communities and enhancing access to education and healthcare through digital means. Despite existing challenges, particularly in rural areas, Hussain outlines government measures to promote digital inclusion, including tax reductions on digital devices and financial services, digital literacy programs, and initiatives targeting female entrepreneurs and SMEs. He stresses the importance of international cooperation in advancing digital inclusion and expresses gratitude to partners for their support. In conclusion, Hussain reiterates Pakistan's commitment to scaling up efforts for

digital inclusion, particularly for marginalized segments, and leveraging digital technology to realize SDGs, extending warm wishes to the audience.

9.Ms.Abigail Poole,
New Zealand Permanent Representative to ESCAP
Ms. Abigail Poole explores the pivotal role of digital innovation in advancing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing the exponential growth of digital technologies like AI and their foreseeable expansion in the coming decade. She acknowledges the dual nature of this growth, presenting both opportunities and risks, particularly for small nations with limited resources and vulnerable populations, such as many Pacific nations. Poole highlights the potential of digital tools to enhance resilience, empower communities, and foster well-being, but stresses the necessity of proactive and coordinated leadership to ensure inclusivity and address emerging challenges like cybersecurity, misinformation, and environmental sustainability. She advocates for trustworthy, accessible, and safe digital environments, emphasizing the importance of equitable access to technology and online services for all. Poole extends an invitation for collaboration in navigating the digital landscape towards a sustainable and equitable future, recognizing the transformative impact of digital innovation on economies and livelihoods, particularly for small and isolated states.

10.Mrs.Paulomi Tripathi,
Deputy Chief of Mission and Deputy Permanent Representative to ESCAP
Mrs. Paulomi Tripathi highlights India's proactive stance in leveraging digital innovation to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She commends the Chair and Vice-Chairs and expresses gratitude to ESCAP and the Kingdom of Thailand for facilitating the meeting. Tripathi emphasizes India's commitment to responsible innovation and the creation of ecosystems conducive to sustainable development. She showcases India's robust digital infrastructure, notably the Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), based on open-source, interoperable, and scalable technology, facilitating the development of affordable and secure digital solutions. Tripathi illustrates the transformative impact of India's initiatives such as the Aadhaar program, Jan Dhan Yojna, and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in promoting financial inclusion, with over 500 million people brought into the banking system. She underscores the role of digital innovation in healthcare, education, and disaster management, citing examples like CoWin, Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, and the Prime Minister's e-VIDYA initiative. Tripathi highlights India's leadership in shaping DPI as an accelerator of SDGs during its Presidency of the G20 Digital Economy Ministers, emphasizing principles of public benefit, trust, and transparency. She concludes by affirming India's commitment to supporting ESCAP's efforts in harnessing digital technologies for sustainable development.

11.Ms.Nguyen Thu Thuy,
Third Secretary, Deputy Permanent Representative of VietNam to ESCAP, Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in the Kingdom of Thailand
Ms. Nguyen Thu Thuy emphasizes the imperative of digital transformation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution in global development,centering the Asia-Pacific region's slow progress in

implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Vietnam, recognizing the significance of digital innovation, has implemented various policies to harness digital technology effectively. Thuy highlights Vietnam's National Strategy on Digital Transformation and substantial investments in ICT infrastructure, startup support, skills development, and cybersecurity. She shares Vietnam's experience and proposes priorities for advancing digital innovation, including political commitment, a robust legal framework, support for entrepreneurship, education, and international cooperation. Thuy acknowledges the crucial role of the United Nations and UNESCAP in coordinating efforts to promote digital innovation for sustainable development and expresses Vietnam's readiness to contribute to global initiatives and policy development.

12.Ms.Ayşe Mehlika Yıldız Ersen
Second Secretary and Deputy Permanent Representative to ESCAP
Ms. Ayşe Mehlika spoke on behalf of H.E. Mrs. Serap Ersoy; In a rapidly evolving technological landscape, Türkiye sees the pivotal role of digital innovation in advancing sustainable development, advocating for inclusive decision-making and transparent governance to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Türkiye's robust employment of digital technologies, notably through the "e-government" platform, reflects its commitment to providing efficient government services. Recognizing the global significance of digital transformation, Türkiye reaffirms its dedication to fostering international cooperation, particularly in managing Artificial Intelligence. As co-chair of the Group of Friends of the Least Developed Countries at the UN, Türkiye highlights its support for the UN Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries, emphasizing its contribution to enhancing science, technology, and innovation capacities in LDCs. Türkiye urges ESCAP members to collaborate with the Technology Bank to leverage technology for sustainable development. Additionally, Türkiye stresses the importance of bridging the digital divide and integrating green principles into digital solutions, emphasizing the need for human-centered approaches to digital innovation. Türkiye calls for effective leadership and global cooperation guided by the SDGs to ensure a fair, inclusive, and sustainable future for all. Finally, Türkiye acknowledges the relevance of the 81st Commission Meeting's theme, focusing on regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly pertinent in light of recent natural disasters.

13.Mr.George Shoshitashvili,
Counselor, Multilateral and Regional Economic Cooperation Division, International Economic Relations Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
Mr. George Shoshitashvili, emphasizes Georgia's dedication to sustainable development through progress and innovation, particularly in governance and public services. Georgia has successfully implemented digital initiatives like the Public Service Hall, offering over 470 public services in a convenient one-stop-shop format. The nation also prioritizes economic growth through digital innovation, with initiatives like the Innovation and Technology Agency fostering a vibrant startup ecosystem. Georgia's flexible tax regime has attracted over 120 international IT companies. Mr. Shoshitashvili highlights Georgia's successful reforms and its emerging status as a regional hub, facilitated by free trade agreements and significant investments in infrastructure. Georgia aims to connect to the EU's single energy market through the Black Sea

Submarine Cable Project and hosts the Silk Road Forum biennially to enhance trade and connectivity. Mr. Shoshitashvili concludes by reaffirming Georgia's commitment to leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development, believing that technology can overcome challenges and create a better future for all.

14.Mr.Emil Ahmadov,
Second Secretary of the Consular, Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Emil Ahmadov from Azerbaijan expresses gratitude to the chairperson and hosts of the session, highlighting Azerbaijan's commitment to sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. He acknowledges the region's rapid growth accompanied by rising inequality, emphasizing Azerbaijan's efforts to deepen integration and strengthen economic ties. Azerbaijan, strategically located between East and West, promotes regional cooperation through energy projects and economic diversification initiatives. Mr. Ahmadov outlines Azerbaijan's active participation in regional transportation corridors and its focus on leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development, including initiatives like the Trans-Caspian Fiber-Optic Cable project and Smart Cities and Villages project. He also underscores Azerbaijan's commitment to cybersecurity and information security, highlighting improvements in global cybersecurity rankings. Azerbaijan aligns its national development policies with the 2030 Development Agenda and emphasizes collective action to combat climate change, declaring 2024 as the "Green World Solidarity Year." Mr. Ahmadov concludes by affirming Azerbaijan's commitment to regional stability, equal opportunities, and cooperation through ESCAP's active role in addressing challenges in the region.

15.Ms.Klumch Tangelbad,
Planning Specialist, Ministry of Finance
Ms. Klumch Tangelbad, representing Palau, highlights the country's commitment to digital innovation for sustainable development despite limited resources. Palau has made significant progress in improving digital connectivity, including the installation of submarine cables and the deployment of 5G technology, which supports efforts in the digital government sector. Initiatives such as electronic health management systems and educational platforms are making public services more accessible and efficient. Palau is also focusing on cultivating a strong digital economy, supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs through training programs and the development of a multi-service digital platform. Access to digital tools and digital literacy are prioritized through educational strategies aimed at equipping schools with technology and expanding remote learning programs. Palau is actively developing legislative frameworks and a cybersecurity strategy to protect user rights and secure online environments. Internationally, Palau engages with global partners, including ESCAP, to share experiences and learn from advancements, refining strategies for sustainable digital development.

16.Mr.Lam Chun Wah Parson,
Director, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (HKETO), Bangkok
Mr. Lam Chun Wah talked about Hong Kong's dedication to propelling sustainable development through digital innovation. Hong Kong is actively fostering digital initiatives across sectors to establish itself as a global innovation and technology hub. Notably, the

city leads in green finance, issuing pioneering digitally native green bonds and striving to become a green fintech hub. Additionally, Hong Kong is advancing digital technologies to mitigate environmental impact, with initiatives in energy-saving technologies and eco-friendly products. The city prioritizes the digitalization of government services, launching numerous initiatives leveraging blockchain and AI for enhanced public services. Looking forward, Hong Kong remains committed to nurturing digitally driven innovations that align with sustainable development goals, fostering an environment conducive to sustainable digital growth.

17.Mr.Hua Liu
Deputy Director General and Head of the Department of Technical Cooperation International Atomic Energy Agency
Mr. Hua Liu, representing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), underscores the agency's dedication to leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific, guided by its motto 'Atoms for Peace and Development.' The IAEA actively supports countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through various initiatives, with a focus on integrating digital technology into nuclear operations and across diverse sectors such as human health, food, agriculture, and climate change. Initiatives like the Rays of Hope initiative address cancer care shortages and efforts to tackle plastic pollution, highlighting digitalization's role in information sharing and disease prevention.

Furthermore, the IAEA emphasizes the synergy between nuclear technologies and digital innovation in enhancing agricultural productivity and food security, exemplified by initiatives like Atoms4Food launched in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Through regional cooperation agreements like the Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development, and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology for Asia and the Pacific (RCA) and the Sub-regional Approach to the Pacific Islands (SAPI), the IAEA promotes South-South cooperation and regional collaboration, leveraging digital technology to strengthen training and capacity building in remote areas. With a commitment to enhancing collaboration with ESCAP and other partners, the IAEA aims to deliver impactful programs and initiatives for sustainable development, particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), ensuring a more secure, inclusive, and resilient future for the region.

18.United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) representative
UNEP emphasizes the significance of leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific, echoing the sentiments of the recent UN Environment Assembly meeting in Nairobi. Highlighting the crucial role of digital transformation in supporting sustainable economies and societies, the Ministerial Declaration underscores the importance of bridging digital divides, ensuring equal access to environmental information, and harnessing emerging technologies for sustainability monitoring. The speech outlines three key areas where digital innovation can accelerate environmental sustainability: providing real-time data for assessing supply chain sustainability, aligning capital with sustainability goals, and influencing

consumer choices through digital platforms. It concludes by advocating for the Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability (CODES), aiming to embed sustainability in all aspects of digitalization and address climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution through inclusive processes, resource allocation, and risk mitigation measures.

19.Ms.Kathryn Clarkson
Head of IFRC Country Cluster Delegation for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam And Permanent Observer of IFRC to UNESCAP on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) representative
Kathryn Clarkson, representing the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in the Asia Pacific region, opens with the critical need to leverage digital innovation for advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Highlighting the region's increasing vulnerability to disasters and crises exacerbated by climate change, Clarkson emphasizes the disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable populations, who are also excluded by the digital divide. Lack of access to technology hampers their ability to receive early warning information about disasters, escalating the risk to life and livelihoods. Clarkson stresses the importance of digital connectivity for facilitating humanitarian assistance, advocating for bridging the digital divide to reach communities at higher risk effectively. The IFRC is committed to digitally transforming humanitarian services to enhance relevance, speed, quality, and accessibility, leveraging the unique position of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to directly engage with communities. Clarkson invites further discussion on this topic during a side event organized in collaboration with the Thai Red Cross Society, Thai Ministry of Health, and ITU to promote the use of digital technologies for humanitarian assistance.

20.Dr.Theresa Devasahayam,
Soroptimist International Representative
Dr. Theresa Devasahayam, representing Soroptimist International, talks about the transformative role of digitalization in shaping the future, driving economic growth, resource optimization, service accessibility, and flexibility. She highlights how digitalization enables women to balance work and caregiving responsibilities, citing examples such as remote work opportunities in call centers and administrative roles. Emphasizing the crucial role of digitalization in education, particularly amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Devasahayam discusses the challenges faced in the Philippines due to internet connectivity issues and the prohibitive costs of access to technology for rural households.

Soroptimist International's Access to Education Project (ATE) in the Philippines addresses these challenges by providing tertiary-level female students from lower-income families with grants for technical and vocational education, along with access to digital platforms and electronic devices. Beyond affordability, the project equips young women with digital skills, enabling them to compete in the evolving job market and reducing the gender gap in skilled labor. Dr. Devasahayam concludes by advocating for gender-inclusive development agendas that prioritize equal opportunities in the digital age.

21.Mr.Abdul Rahman Mohammed
Muslim World League (MWL) Representative
Mr. Abdul Rahman Mohammed, representing the Muslim World League, extends greetings as the 80th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) convenes. Commending efforts towards a better future, he underscores the session's significance in exploring digital innovation's role in business development, user experience enhancement, and value generation. Recognizing digital innovation's transformative potential, Mohammed cites initiatives in Somalia and the Republic of Comoros, where digital tools facilitated impactful projects in water channel rehabilitation and medical surveys. Emphasizing the importance of data analysis and the need to embrace digital innovation, particularly in regions with limited data access, he aligns with the session's agenda to enhance databases and leverage technology for optimal project outcomes, expressing gratitude for the forum's invitation and anticipating mutual benefits through collaboration and innovation for global betterment.

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23.Dr. George Lam
Chair of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN)
The ESCAP Sustainable Business Network represents businesses across the Asia Pacific region committed to sustainable development by creating infrastructure, technology, logistics, goods, and services that improve lives and foster a more sustainable and inclusive future. Urging closer collaboration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, they advocate for clear policy frameworks to accelerate green innovation and transition to net zero carbon emissions. Emphasizing partnership among businesses, governments, and communities, they align with Environmental, Social, and Governance principles, mobilize Green Technology and Finance solutions, and implement the Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business. This initiative focuses on five pillars: establishing a Green Energy system, developing smart, low-carbon, and climate-resilient infrastructure, promoting Green Finance and ESG investment, fostering Green Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and transitioning towards a Circular Economy. By investing in smarter, greener solutions and nurturing youth to become sustainability-committed professionals, they aim to lead the green transformation for the region, balancing development aspirations with environmental

responsibility and building back greener and smarter from the COVID-19 pandemic. They call on businesses to join them in accelerating the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Afternoon Plenary (Day 2)
Agenda item 2 Theme topic: "Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific"
High-level thematic roundtable on: Digital Inclusion

The afternoon session of agenda item 2: "Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific" continued with another high-level thematic roundtable. This roundtable session focused on the importance of "Digital Inclusion" within the Asia-Pacific region, specifically in achieving the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the impending Global Digital Compact. According to the United Nations Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, *digital inclusion* is defined as "equitable, meaningful, and safe access to use, lead, and design of digital technologies, services, and associated opportunities for everyone, everywhere." **Ms. Sanjana Chhantyal**, a 30 for 2030 Network Member and a passionate advocate for women's and youth's empowerment from Nepal, was the moderator of this discussion.

The session began with a short video which emphasized the importance of ensuring that marginalized groups have access to digital technologies and innovation, as several people in Asia and the Pacific are excluded due to factors such as gender, age, disability, geography, ethnicity, migration status, education, and wealth. The panel discussed ways to give people access to skills and training, foster supportive ecosystems, and protect marginalized groups from online abuse, to ensure no one is left behind in the digital age and the achievement of sustainable development goals.

The first speaker was **Ms. Moon-sil Choi**, Vice President of the Department of Digital Inclusion at the National Information Society Agency, Republic of Korea. With over 28 years of expertise in digital inclusion and ICT strategy, she played a pivotal role in establishing Korea's Digital Bill of Rights in 2023, which guides the nation towards a new digital norm and significantly expands the target groups and concept of digital inclusion policies. The Digital Bill of Rights is structured around five fundamental principles: Freedom, Fairness, Safety, Innovation, and Solidarity. After conducting a comprehensive diagnosis of Korea's response to the digital landscape, 52 critical issues were identified across 17 sectors. These issues were organized into domestic and international categories, and related policies and systems were assessed for effectiveness. A comprehensive pan-governmental plan was developed to address these issues, with the Ministry of Science and IST collaborating with other relevant Ministries to integrate policies and conduct regular progress reviews. Key issues being addressed include the recognition of copyright in the development and utilization of AI, safety and ethical trustworthiness of AI technology, ensuring the right to disconnection, and combating fake news. Korea is actively addressing these challenges at the national level and is committed to sharing experiences and insights with UNESCO and other nations to foster a collaborative approach to digital transformation.

The next speaker, **Ms. Ying Zhang**, Vice President of the Centre for International Knowledge on Development in China, discussed some of China's most successful initiatives which used digital

technologies for poverty reduction and economic inclusion. The speaker shared initiatives that addressed the digital divide in rural areas. The government works with local enterprises and the private sector to improve digital infrastructure, making it more accessible and affordable for poorer regions. The national initiative integrates local practices and experiments. The first aspect of this collaboration is infrastructure, where the central government and provincial municipal governments have contributed funds to provide optical fiber communications and 4G services to 98% of poor villages by 2021. Additionally, poor people receive discounts on internet services and mobile phones. Another initiative is e-commerce, which has reduced entry barriers for small and micro businesses through projects like Alibaba's training rural residents to set up shops online. By 2020, $3.7 billion was invested in this sector from both public and private sources. However, challenges remain, such as providing means of livelihood for disadvantaged people in villages. Alibaba addresses this by providing training for disabled people, women, and youth to set up village shops and delivery services. Furthermore, digital finance is being promoted to improve financial inclusion in rural areas. She highlighted several examples, including Alibaba setting up the first cloud-based commercial bank to provide loans to poor individuals and small businesses, JD.com offering digital agricultural loans, and online education training to connect rural schools with urban schools and provide rural teachers with skills training. Additionally, she mentioned the use of digital platforms for rural doctors to connect with urban doctors for difficult case diagnoses.

The next speaker was **Mr. Zorikto Gomboin**, Deputy Head of the Laboratory of International Development, Standardization and Application of ICTs at the Radio Research and Development Institute of the Russian Federation. Mr. Gomboin is a digital policy researcher with experience in international digital cooperation and has contributed to national legislation and international agreements on digital accessibility and inclusion in the Russian Federation. He was asked to share how the legislative and project approaches have complemented each other to improve digital inclusion in the Russian Federation. He shares that numerous necessary services have become digital, and therefore are not accessible to many people. It is a complex issue globally but especially for people in remote areas with geological difficulties such as the harsh weather conditions in Siberia. Furthermore, the lack of software development, such as language options, prevent access to several groups.

Next was **Mr. Prashant Ranjan Verma**, an accessibility specialist at Daisy Consortium, who conducts training in digital talking books production and provides support to libraries and publishers worldwide. He has conducted trainings on information accessibility in over 25 countries and prepared numerous manuals, tutorials, and videos on tools useful for accessible books production and reading. The speaker emphasizes the significant impact accessible digital technology can have on the lives of persons with disabilities. He shares examples of how technologies like screen readers and inclusive operating systems enable visually impaired individuals to use smartphones, computers, and the internet. Digital technologies are also opening up new fields of employment for persons with disabilities, allowing them to work in mainstream offices. Mr. Verma encourages governments to consider policies around accessibility to ensure equal opportunities for all. The inclusion of people with disabilities through such technologies brings significant benefits to society, including reducing inequalities

and poverty, and increasing productivity. To ensure digital technologies are accessible, governments need to adopt or create technical standards for accessibility compliance, have strong legislation to enforce accessibility standards, increase awareness and provide training, and establish a grievance mechanism for reporting and enforcing accessibility compliance.

Ms. Pitiporn Phanaphat, First Executive Vice President of Digital Products and Platforms Business, Siam Commercial Bank, was the final speaker. She discussed trends in financial digital inclusion, obstacles to providing access to financial services to vulnerable populations, and how to overcome them. The speaker mentioned the shift towards digital platforms during the pandemic and the resulting increase in digital users for banking, e-commerce, and real-time delivery services. With more data available, banks can offer better services to customers. However, challenges remain in areas such as internet accessibility, digital literacy, and financial literacy, particularly in rural areas. Thailand, with high internet penetration, still faces these challenges, particularly in digital literacy and financial product usage. To address these issues, collaboration between the public and private sectors, as well as regulators, is necessary to make digital services more accessible, customer-friendly, and financially inclusive for all demographics.

During the second round of discussions, **Ms. Moon-sil Choi** shared the potential impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and the importance of the suitable strategies to protect people's rights in the face of AI development. The strategies were categorized into three key areas: policy development by governments, technical contributions by the private sector, and raising initiatives through public-private partnerships. Governments must implement policies that strike a balance between protecting users and promoting industry growth, including establishing institutional safeguards against AI dysfunctions such as deep fakes, copyright infringement, and privacy breaches, while also promoting large-scale national initiatives and support for SM technological development. The private sector should develop and utilize AI technology ethically while fulfilling its social responsibilities, adhering to government regulations and implementing their own AI ethics principles. They must also consider vulnerable groups who might be marginalized or excluded from benefiting from AI technologies. Collaborative public-private partnerships were emphasized as the most effective strategy for addressing digital rights and the equitable distribution of AI benefits. These partnerships can create synergies in raising public awareness through educational initiatives, campaigns, and other similar efforts. Ethics training for corporate employees and AI developers was also highlighted as important for promoting ethical competency for both users and providers.

Next, **Ms. Ying Zhang** discusses the importance of building the digital capacity of youth, women, and the elderly to improve their employability. The speaker discusses various initiatives taken by the Chinese government to empower these marginalized groups through digital skills training and access. An example given was Alibaba's award-winning Cyber Mulan program, which supports employment and skill enhancement for women. The program includes helping 4 million women in poor regions with free insurance and job security, setting up job centers for digital skill training, and supporting 70 rural women's football teams. For the youth, online training and education programs have been initiated by both the government and private sector

to enhance their digital skills and improve employment opportunities. The government also has a systematic training program to support returning youth to start businesses in the countryside, mostly in modern agriculture and local tourism. Lastly, the speaker highlights the importance of digital access for the elderly during the pandemic and the government's efforts to make digital platforms more accessible to them, including turning government websites into large text and audio versions and allowing cash payments in shops and businesses.

Continuing the discussion with **Mr. Zorikto Gomboin** from Russia. The Russian Federation's efforts to include Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in digital public policies were highlighted as a means to promote inclusive economic growth. Additionally, a cross-generational technology educational program between youths and the elderly was promoted under the name "tell your grandma". Mr. Gombo stated that they plan to introduce similar services that improve digital literacy to all people, through creativity, innovation and new technology.

The next speaker, **Mr. Prashant Ranjan Verma** spoke about the need for digital technologies to be accessible, available, usable, affordable, and of high quality for persons with disabilities and those in vulnerable situations. Mr. Verma spoke about the potential of accessible digital technologies in making persons with disabilities more productive. The focus was on digital accessibility for persons with disabilities in the Asia Pacific region. It was highlighted that most digital products and services are inaccessible, leading to further isolation and exclusion of persons with disabilities from the digital economy. Studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that persons with disabilities faced significant challenges in accessing essential services such as food, education, and employment due to inaccessible digital services. Governments were urged to create new policies to ensure digital accessibility and affordability. Assistive technologies, which enable access to digital devices for persons with disabilities, were identified as a solution, but most of them are not compliant with regional languages and are expensive. Therefore, countries need to conduct studies to identify technological gaps and develop assistive technologies in local languages. In developing countries, where disability and poverty are closely linked, governments need to provide digital devices and training to persons with disabilities to take advantage of the digital economy. Innovative approaches to financial inclusivity include innovative digital products, AI-empowered solutions, and omni-channel or digital services with a human touch. An example given was a digital lending program for business owners, which provided loans to over a million entrepreneurs, mostly women and from rural areas, within three clicks and in 10 minutes.

Finally, **Ms. Pitiporn Phanaphat** discussed the potential of digital innovation in empowering small entrepreneurs, particularly female entrepreneurs, to grow their businesses through dynamic pricing and customer-friendly digital services. The use of AI was highlighted as a means to provide micro insurance, micro investments, and protections to small customers. However, it was emphasized that human intervention would still be necessary for certain segments. The importance of designing solutions based on localized information and ensuring no one is left behind in the digital revolution was reiterated.

To wrap up the session, **Ms. Sanjana Chhantyal** concluded that the panelists, including individuals from governments, think tanks, civil society, and the private sector, all agreed on the need for collaboration between all sectors and countries to build a better world where all citizens can thrive in a digital age. Collaboration is key to digital inclusion.

Afternoon Plenary (Day 2)
Agenda item 3 Theme topic: "Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked
Developing and Small Island Developing States"
Leveraging Digitalization for Productivity and Decent Employment

Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, began the session by emphasizing the transformative potential of digitalization for these developing countries, enabling access to global markets, fostering entrepreneurship, and improving essential service delivery. However, she also acknowledged the challenges of transitioning towards a comprehensive digital economy, including establishing robust digital infrastructure, fostering a digitally literate workforce, and addressing potential pay gaps and the rural-urban divide. Regional cooperation is crucial in harnessing digitalization to bolster trade and investment for these countries, as their presence in digital trade and investment remains minimal. Digital trade cooperation and coordination is crucial for enhancing digital infrastructure and literacy in the Asia-Pacific region. The speaker highlighted the commitment of the UN Regional Commission to supporting member states, particularly those in special situations, and initiatives like the Asia-Pacific Information Super Highway as examples of collaborative efforts to reduce digital trade barriers, stimulate investment, and contribute towards a more integrated and inclusive digital trade framework. The Doha Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the decade 2022-2031 and upcoming Global conferences for LDCs and Small Island Developing States were identified as crucial opportunities for the international community to offer support to complement the digital transformation efforts of countries in special situations. The speaker also reiterated the importance of regional cooperation and partnership in capitalizing on digitalization for countries in special situations.

Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing, continued the opening remarks by discussing the digital divide between Less Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and developed countries. The speaker highlights that while LDCs account for 36% of GNI per capita in comparison to only 1.4% in developed countries, they account for only 0.3% of global digitally deliverable services trade. The speaker emphasizes the need for more innovative approaches to bridge this gap, suggesting five specific points. First, adequate policy support is necessary at global and regional levels to integrate digital technologies and create decent job opportunities. Second, education, skills development, and entrepreneurship are critical to prepare the workforce for the demands of the digital age. Third, significant investment in ICT infrastructure is required to close the gap and make the Internet affordable. Fourth, the benefits of the digital era must be maximized while addressing potential risks, such as artificial intelligence. Fifth, stronger multi-stakeholder partnerships are essential to facilitate the application of modern technologies for the greater benefit of humanity. Global initiatives, including the United Nations, are working to define shared principles for a secure and open digital future for all.

Ms. Fatima updates the delegates on the key action areas identified at the United Nations Preparatory Committee for the upcoming LLC3 conference, including STI and structural

transformation. The speaker also highlights the importance of meeting STI commitments through enhanced technical and financial support and the implementation of WTO article 66.2. The speaker then provides updates on recent activities of her office in support of LDCs and SIDS, including the finalization of the Doha Program of Action and progress made in revitalizing the United Nations Technology Bank for the LDCs. The speaker also mentions upcoming conferences for SIDS and LLDCs, which aim to establish centers of excellence and establish deliverables that could accelerate sustainable development in these countries. The speaker calls on all governments to participate at the highest political level in these events and to work together to support these vulnerable countries in harnessing the benefits of digital technologies for their sustainable development and prosperity.

Next, **H.E. Mr. Ly Thuch**, Senior Minister, President of National Committee for ESCAP, and First Vice President of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA), Cambodia, addressed the audience on behalf of his country during the special body focused on leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. He expressed his gratitude to the UN and ESCAP leadership for their guidance in navigating the digital revolution. Cambodia is embracing digital innovation as a significant leap toward modernization and resilience, recognizing the immense potential it offers in transforming public service delivery, agriculture, and the digital economy. The country's digital transformation journey is deeply entwined with its national development goals, aiming to catalyze economic growth, enhance competitiveness, and provide new opportunities for youth. The vision is to make education more accessible, healthcare more responsive, and governance more transparent and accountable. Cambodia's commitment to digital inclusivity mirrors the broader aspirations of the Asia Pacific region, with a focus on sharing experiences, learning from neighbors, and collectively overcoming challenges.

H.E. Mr Thuch discussed the importance of digital transformation in achieving sustainable development and bridging the digital divide. They emphasized the use of digital tools to monitor and protect natural resources, combat climate change, and ensure inclusive economic development. The goal is to build a society where anyone can benefit from the digital economy, fostering innovation and regional growth. The speakers urged for collective action and shared responsibility, emphasizing the need for international partnerships to harness the power of digital innovation for sustainable development, peace, and prosperity. The discussions also touched upon the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in 2024, where a new 10-year International compact will be adopted as the successor to the current SIDS program. The unique vulnerabilities of SIDS were reaffirmed as a special case for sustainable development, consistent with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development.

H.E. Ms. Fekitamoeloa K. Utoikamanu, Minister for Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC) of Tonga, focused on the challenges faced by the Pacific region due to climate change and its impact on maritime zones. The declaration made in 2019 by Pacific leaders ensures that rights to maritime zones continue to apply despite physical changes caused by climate change. The

region has made progress in preserving marine and land biodiversity and aims to establish blue ocean economies. However, there are challenges in achieving gender parity, disability inclusion, and equitable economic growth. Access to finance, including climate finance, is a significant hindrance in implementing development priorities. The Pacific region supports the multi-dimensional vulnerability index to evaluate vulnerabilities and enhance access to development and climate finance. The region recognizes the potential of digitization but faces challenges such as infrastructure limitations, poor digital literacy, and weak regulatory frameworks. Investing in digital infrastructure, increasing access to broadband, and lowering the cost of connectivity are essential to harnessing the full potential of digitization for sustainable development.

H.E. Ms. Utoikamanu discussed the importance of digital innovation for sustainable development in the Pacific region. They emphasized the need for global collaboration to narrow the digital gap and enhance accessibility to affordable and reliable internet, particularly in underserved communities. Investment in digital skills training was also highlighted to empower employees and generate new job prospects. Addressing climate change and limited energy resources was deemed crucial when harnessing digitization. The commitment to renewable energy solutions, climate resilience, and early warning systems was also emphasized. Significant investments in digital infrastructure, including expanding broadband access and reducing connectivity costs, were called for to bring about positive change and enable every individual to participate in the digital economy. The need for ethical guidelines, regulatory frameworks, research, and public education to manage the risks and benefits of new technologies was also acknowledged. The Pacific region was encouraged to make significant investments in its people and cultivate strong partnerships to create a resilient future and ensure the achievement of the sustainable development goals by 2030.

The next speaker, **H.E. Mr. Yalakov Babanyyaz**, Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy, Turkmenistan, highlighted the importance of digital technologies in increasing productivity and employment in modern times. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for expansion of mobile and digitalization models, as they play a critical role in promoting sustainable development. Digital technologies increase jobs and ensure efficiency in various sectors of the economy, opening up new opportunities for economic development, policy implementation, and public service management. They also contribute to the transition to a circular economy, filling information gaps, increasing efficiency, and enabling new forms of economic activity.

Turkmenistan is actively developing its digital services sector and communications, implementing projects to create modern communication systems and increase internet access in all regions. One such project is developing mobile communications, including 4G and 5G high-speed internet, which will help increase internet users and serve the service sector and e-government. Additionally, a national data center has been established, and over a thousand small-sized telephone telephones have been built in rural areas.

The success of sustainable development depends on updating economic approaches at national, regional, and global levels. Building capacity in digitalization and increasing knowledge sharing are essential for empowering developing countries and ensuring their equal participation in global economic processes. H.E. Mr. Babanyyaz, encourages all participants in the meeting

to support cooperation on digital technologies in various fields, including the service sector, to expand employment, influence growth productivity, and increase production.

Next, in a presentation video, **Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana**, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, presents insights from the Asia Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2024: *Leveraging digitalization for productivity and decent employment.* The traditional development path of labor-intensive industrialization is becoming less viable due to automation and the shift of labor from agriculture to low productivity services. However, the services sector is undergoing a remarkable evolution, bolstered by digitalization. Digital technologies are making services more tradable, and smaller economies can leverage digital platforms to reach global markets. The services sector offers a wide range of job opportunities and is a dynamic engine of economic growth. To seize the opportunities of digitalization for countries in special situations, it is essential to address critical challenges such as limited digital infrastructure, low digital literacy rates, and a lack of skilled professionals. The way forward involves prioritizing investment in digital infrastructure, fostering a digitally literate workforce, implementing robust regulatory frameworks, and collaboration between governments, businesses, and civil society organizations.

Continuing the discussions, the moderator opened the floor for a country intervention session. The first speaker was Fiji Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, **H. E. Ms. Qereqeretabua**, who shared valuable insights on the digital transformation efforts in Fiji and the importance of policy and governance frameworks to guide this journey. She mentions the creation of enabling policies and regulations, the government's lead role in reforms, and the initiatives taken to modernize government websites and e-commerce platforms in partnership with private sectors and regional counterparts. The Sol fintech app and E transport card top-up via empa are among the e-commerce initiatives mentioned. Fiji's digitalization journey aims to provide online services for various applications and registrations, ensuring efficient and convenient access for the public.

Fiji's representative discussed various digital initiatives launched in the country to support farmers and facilitate electronic payments, mobile apps, and remittances. However, Fiji acknowledged the challenges in digitizing the economy, including costly internet connectivity, urban-rural digital divide, and lack of automation in businesses. The representative emphasized the importance of regional cooperation for small developing nations like Fiji to learn from each other's digitalization efforts and build capacity to complement their domestic efforts. The session also featured Bangladesh's perspective on the critical issues faced by least developed countries and the need to ensure their voices are heard and acted upon with urgency and compassion.

Next, **H. E. Mr. Shahriar Kader Siddiky**, the Secretary of Economic Relations division Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh, discussed the progress of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), with Bangladesh being highlighted for achieving graduation requirements and transitioning from "Digital Bangladesh" to "Smart Bangladesh." The country has made significant strides in expanding connectivity and bridging the digital divide, with millions gaining access to high-speed internet and over 16,500 entrepreneurs, including 5,200 women, achieving self-reliance through

digital centers. Bangladesh has also launched initiatives like the Equality Center and the National Portal to promote digital inclusion and international trade. The country has signed the UNASCAP agreement on facilitation of cross-border trade and is preparing for its implementation to reduce trade transaction costs. Bangladesh proposed that UNASCAP should take actions to promote sustainable development in LDCs, increase export support, and provide pathways for developing countries. H. E. Mr. Siddiky also emphasized the importance of development integration among economies in the Asia Pacific region, focusing on areas such as digital connectivity, environmental cooperation, health, food security, trade linkages, investment, and value chain participation. These efforts aim to help countries in the region become more resilient to future shocks and move up in the regional value chain. Additionally, the need to mainstream climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts into global development strategies was emphasized to safeguard the livelihoods and well-being of vulnerable countries. The event concluded with a call for all member states and stakeholders to reaffirm their commitment to the development and well-being of LDCs and work together to build a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for all.

Tajikistan's representative, **H.E. Mr. Ardasher Qodiri,** Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Tajikistan, also delivered a statement, highlighting the importance of transit potential and the implementation of regional transport and transit corridors for landlocked countries to accelerate sustainable development. Tajikistan identified energy and transport as top priorities, focusing on modernizing and increasing the capacity of its existing hydro power stations and adopting a strategy on green economy development. The country also emphasized the importance of increasing the share of renewable energy among LDCs and transferring modern and advanced technologies to improve energy efficiency and energy saving. Another area of focus for Tajikistan is water, which is considered the most valuable resource for development. H.E. Mr. Qodiri discussed the importance of utilizing opportunities offered by the UN Water Action Decade and Agenda to implement water-related sustainable goals and targets in LLDCs and SIDS. Tajikistan plans to host the third International High-level Conference on the Implementation of the Water Decade in Dushanbe in June 2024, inviting ESCAP members and associates to participate.

The floor was then given to **Mr. Rashad Khaligov**, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Innovation and Digital Development Agency of the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is leading the digital revolution, offering unprecedented opportunities for sustainable development. Their government portal provides over 400 public services, simplifying processes and making government accessible to all citizens. Azerbaijan has implemented a single sign-on system across more than 100 government and private sector information systems, ensuring security and efficiency. Innovative digital identity systems and a national data and document exchange platform promote transparency and efficiency, underpinning their digital governance ecosystem. Azerbaijan has also developed sector-specific digital solutions, such as e-procurement, e-justice, and e-education, to meet the specific needs of their citizens while contributing to broader goals of efficiency, transparency, and sustainability.

Next, **H. E. Dr. Ramesh Chandra Paudel**, Honorable Member of the National Planning Commission of Nepal, discussed his country's progress towards sustainable development and the role of digital technology in their efforts. Nepal has incorporated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into its national policies and has made significant progress towards SDG targets, with an average of 50% progress towards 2022 targets and 41% towards 2030 targets. However, sustainable efforts are needed to ensure universal high-quality education, safe water supply, and enhancement of employment-related indicators and financial inclusion. The industrial sector and urban planning require advanced digital transformation efforts to minimize environmental impact. Notable achievements include community-based forest management and conservation of iconic species like tigers and rhinos. Nepal is prioritizing themes such as decent jobs and social protection, food health and education systems transformation, sustainable and resilient urbanization, climate action, digital transformation, and data management in preparation for their graduation from LDC status. This graduation will have significant implications for Nepal's trade, aid, and investment involvement, requiring financing of the SDGs, capacity building, institution strengthening, and fostering collaboration to create a conducive environment for research and innovations. He also stressed the importance of e-governance and digital transformations in enhancing the comparative advantage and trade competitiveness of least developed, landlocked, and small island developing states. He finally thanked the audience for their attention before yielding the floor to the next speaker.

Mr. Ke Yousheng, permanent representative of China to the UNESCAP, began his statement by explaining that countries in the Asia Pacific region should uphold the spirit of solidarity and cooperation to help countries in special situations (LDCs, LLDCs, SIDs) address challenges and promote sustainable development. Stakeholders should uphold true multilateralism, safeguard the international system with the UN at its core, and advocate equal and orderly multipolarity and universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization. Countries should resolutely oppose attempts to roll back globalization and overstretch the security concept, and reject all forms of unilateralism and protectionism, to create a favorable environment for the development of countries in special situations.

Since its inception over 10 years ago, the Belt and Road initiative has brought plenty of development opportunities and space to countries in special situations. Landmark projects such as the Siem Reap-Angkor International Airport in Cambodia and the Maputo–Katembe bridge in Mozambique have created hundreds of thousands of job opportunities in LDCs and greatly boosted their development momentum. Projects such as the China-Europe Railway Express, China-Laos Railway, and China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Highway, have created new channels for LLDCs to open up to the world, and new platforms for international cooperation. A global development initiative proposed by China has received the support of more than 100 countries and international organizations. Furthemore, China has set up a global development and South-South cooperation fund, totaling 4 billion US Dollars, and a large number of small and beautiful projects benefiting people`s livelihood have been implemented, benefiting dozens of countries in special situations. China pledged to actively support UNESCAP in playing its unique role, and has provided funding to the ESCAP secretariat through the China ESCAP Corporation program to carry out projects on structural transformation and climate financing for countries in special situations. China will continue to actively promote high quality Belt and Road

cooperation, accelerate the implementation of the global development initiative, push for the implementation of the Doha program of action, and other documents, and support the upcoming third UN Conference on landlocked developing countries in achieving positive results.

The next speaker was **Mr. Ayubkhon Sultonov**, Head of the Department for Development of E-Government System, Ministry of Digital technologies of Republic of Uzbekistan, delivered the country's statement. Uzbekistan, a landlocked country in Central Asia, faces unique challenges but has embraced the digital age as a catalyst for transformation and prosperity. The country has made significant strides in advancing digital infrastructure and capabilities, with a growing young population eager to embrace technology. Uzbekistan's ambitious digital Pakistan 2030 strategy aims to accelerate various sectors, including education, healthcare, finance, and governance, using digital technologies to improve public services and enhance the quality of life for its citizens. The country has set ambitious goals, such as reaching the top 30 in the UN eGovernment ranking and increasing export levels to $5 billion USD. Uzbekistan is also working on creating a workforce of at least 300,000 IT specialists for export-oriented digital development. Despite challenges, including ensuring equal access to technologies and diminishing the digital divide, Uzbekistan remains committed to fostering a thriving digital ecosystem and welcomes international and private organizations for cooperation towards digital infrastructure, digital economy, and IT outsourcing.

Next, **Mr. Alomlangsy Rajvong**, Director of the Department of International Organisations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR discussed the importance of digitalization in enhancing productivity, connectivity, and social-economic development, particularly for least developed countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The Lao PDR has adopted strategies to transform itself from a landlocked country to a landlinked one, implementing projects like the Lao-China Railways project to improve connectivity and support its vision to serve as a regional hub. The country has also prioritized the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to maintain development momentum and graduate from LDC status by 2026.

Ms. Yoshiko Motoyama, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to ESCAP, Embassy of Japan to Thailand, recognized the need for digital innovation to ensure smooth and sustainable graduation and has been working closely with the UN Technology Bank to conduct technology needs assessments. Ms. Motoyama also emphasizes the importance of promoting digital transition in developing countries as one of its key development cooperation efforts, extending cooperation to help train individuals who will be the bearers of digital solutions. Additionally, Japan expressed its eagerness to participate in the upcoming SIDS International Conference.

Mr. Andranik Grigoryan, First Secretary of the Department of Multilateral Policy and Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, shared their perspectives on the importance of digitalization and cooperation in advancing the common priorities of landlocked developing countries. Armenia highlighted the significance of effective multilateral and regional cooperation, appreciating the work done by the Office of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). They discussed

the importance of tailor-made digital transformation, including equitable and inclusive transport connectivity, and the role of digitalization in addressing the needs of countries in special situations. Armenia and UNESCAP had organized a thematic ministerial meeting on transport connectivity, which resulted in exchanging ideas on creating an appropriate environment for landlocked developing countries to develop digital economies and e-commerce. Thailand emphasized the importance of digitalization in sustainable development, particularly in labor-intensive sectors in Asia and the Pacific. They shared their experience in utilizing digitalization to achieve sustainable development through the application of digital technologies, innovation, and artificial intelligence.

Next on the agenda, a representative from the **Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA)** discussed their approach to modern development, which includes utilizing digital technologies for balance and efficiency, bridging the digital divide through education and capacity building, and enhancing connectivity to facilitate greater flows of goods and services. Thailand is offering training courses on climate-smart agriculture and post-harvest food processing, among others, and is also investing in technology to improve collaboration and networking among development partners in the Asia Pacific region. The importance of South-South and triangular cooperation was also emphasized to help bridge the digital divide between developed and developing countries.

The final country for this session, USA, is represented by **Ms. Zema Semunegus**, Mission Director of USAID Pacific Islands, through video presentation. The United States, as a large and consistent development partner, also shared the commitment to collaborating with countries in special situations, including through digital connectivity and cyber security partnerships in the Pacific Islands. She discusses their engagement with Pacific Partners on Open Radio Access Network and Open Ren technology through UNESCAP. The US is also supporting the development of an undersea cable, the East Micronesia cable, which will connect the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribas, and Nauru, providing connectivity to over 100,000 people in the region. This is the first infrastructure project under a trilateral partnership for infrastructure investment among Australia, Japan, and the US. The US is also working to catalyze the international community and foster public-private partnerships to accelerate progress in the Pacific Islands through digital innovations.
This concluded the discussions for the day.

Afternoon Plenary (Day 3)
Agenda item 2 (b):Subregional perspective
Leveraging Digitalization for Productivity and Decent Employment

Asia and the Pacific region faces a mix of opportunities and challenges in sustainable development due to its diverse range of countries. While significant progress has been made in regional connectivity through information and communication technologies, the region still suffers from significant digital disparities, leaving millions without access to vital digital services in education, health, and finance. Despite this, digital innovations hold great potential for fostering resilience, connectivity, and sustainable development. Leveraging digital technologies can spur economic growth, social well-being, and environmental conservation, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals. The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) plays a crucial role in advancing these goals through cooperation, workshops, and partnerships, guided by its Catalogue of confidence-building measures. CICA actively collaborates with international organizations and development partners to promote best practices in the region.

The ASEAN perspective on sustainable development goals emphasizes the digital transformation of the region, alongside economic opportunities and sub-regional cooperation.

In the ASEAN region, there are significant economic opportunities characterized by resilience and high growth, making it a preferred investment destination. Digitalization plays a crucial role in fostering sustainable development, with its transformative impact facilitating collaboration and enhancing governance. There's a necessity to ensure inclusive growth, making policies between ASEAN leaders focus on sustainability.

Several key initiatives highlight this commitment:

1) The negotiation of the ANTIGA upgrade goods agreement in March 2022 marks a significant step towards promoting circular and green economy practices, unlocking new benefits for the region.
2) In September 2023, the ASEAN Development Economic Agreement (DEFA) was established, further enhancing economic cooperation and sustainable development efforts within the region.
3) Regionally, ASEAN leaders have collaborated to develop key documents such as the ASEAN Framework for Economic Community, demonstrating their dedication to advancing sustainable development on a global scale.

Panel 1 - Subregional perspective on digital innovation of SDG acceleration

1) Thailand's higher education sector is increasingly embracing digital innovations, with universities poised to take the lead in leveraging digital advancements for future sustainability. A strategic plan spanning from 2021 to 2027 outlines key priorities

aimed at reforming education policies and embracing digital transformation. Three critical issues are being addressed:

- o **Digital Learning Reform**: This involves reshaping the landscape of education delivery through digital platforms and methodologies. It encompasses the integration of technology into teaching and learning processes to enhance accessibility, flexibility, and effectiveness.
- o **Big Data for Education**: Harnessing the power of big data in education involves collecting, analyzing, and utilizing vast amounts of educational data to inform decision-making, personalize learning experiences, and improve educational outcomes. This initiative aims to leverage data-driven insights to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative processes within the higher education sector.
- o **Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy**: With the increasing presence of digital technologies in society, fostering digital citizenship and media literacy has become imperative. This initiative focuses on equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the digital landscape responsibly, critically evaluate information, and engage in ethical and informed online behavior.

By addressing these issues, Thailand's higher education sector aims to establish itself as a hub for digital innovation and excellence, contributing to the country's overall socio-economic development and global competitiveness.

2) From the Pacific, Sarah Mecartney's initiative in the Pacific focuses on nurturing ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and digital transformation to boost social and economic development in the region. This effort aims to integrate urban and rural markets while capitalizing on international opportunities for growth.

The digital innovation program encompasses various sectors such as fisheries, agriculture, education, disaster management, and climate action. Through concerted efforts involving co-design, co-investment, and corporate collaboration, the program seeks to prioritize digital literacy, broadband access, and the cultivation of digital entrepreneurship.

Partnerships between all stakeholders are deemed essential for the success of these initiative, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts in driving digital innovation and sustainable development in the Pacific region.

3) Dr. Aladdin Rillo emphasizes the critical role of policy institutes in harnessing knowledge and ensuring its effective utilization for regional development. He underscores the necessity for digital innovation and the cultivation of critical

capabilities to drive impactful change. Moreover, Rillo stresses the importance of ensuring that these efforts reach everyone in the region, highlighting the need for inclusive development. Enhanced connectivity is identified as a key factor in achieving these goals, underscoring the importance of bridging digital divides to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration across the region.

4) Accenture Thailand's approach to nature and biodiversity, sustainable systems and industry, and equity and human wellbeing seems to be multifaceted and progressive.

   o **Nature and Biodiversity**: Accenture likely prioritizes the conservation and protection of Thailand's rich natural resources and diverse ecosystems. This could involve initiatives such as promoting sustainable land use, advocating for wildlife conservation, and supporting efforts to mitigate climate change impacts. Accenture might also engage in projects aimed at preserving biodiversity hotspots and fostering eco-friendly practices among businesses and communities.
   o **Sustainable Systems and Industry**: In line with global sustainability goals, Accenture Thailand probably emphasizes the development and adoption of sustainable practices across various industries. This could include advising companies on reducing their carbon footprint, optimizing resource use, and implementing green technologies. Accenture might also collaborate with governmental and non-governmental organizations to drive policy changes conducive to sustainable development and advocate for the adoption of circular economy principles.
   o **Equity and Human Wellbeing**: Accenture likely recognizes the importance of promoting equity and enhancing human wellbeing as integral parts of sustainable development. This could involve initiatives focused on improving access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, particularly for marginalized communities. Accenture might also champion diversity and inclusion in the workplace, advocating for gender equality and equal opportunities for all individuals. Additionally, the company may support social enterprises and community development projects aimed at fostering inclusive growth and empowering local populations.

Overall, Accenture Thailand appears to be committed to advancing a holistic sustainability agenda that encompasses environmental stewardship, economic prosperity, and social equity. Through its diverse initiatives and collaborations, the company likely seeks to drive positive change and contribute to Thailand's sustainable development goals.

Panel 2 – Subregional perspectives on disaster risk management through digital innovation

5) Digital tools play a crucial role in enhancing access and inclusion, and corporations can derive significant benefits while contributing to risk management through their strategic implementation.

- o **Enhancing Access:** Digital tools such as mobile apps, online platforms, and digital marketplaces can break down barriers to access for marginalized communities. For instance, by providing internet-based services, corporations can reach remote areas where traditional infrastructure is lacking, enabling individuals to access essential products, services, and information. This can be particularly impactful in sectors such as finance, healthcare, and education, where access to digital resources can empower underserved populations and bridge socio-economic gaps.

- o **Promoting Inclusion:** Digital tools offer opportunities to create inclusive environments by accommodating diverse needs and preferences. For example, companies can develop assistive technologies and accessibility features in their digital products to cater to users with disabilities. By prioritizing inclusive design principles, corporations can ensure that their products and services are usable by a wide range of individuals, regardless of age, ability, or background. This fosters a more inclusive society where everyone can participate fully in economic and social activities.

- o **Benefits for Corporations:** Embracing digital tools for enhancing access and inclusion can yield several benefits for corporations. Firstly, it can expand their customer base by tapping into new markets and demographics previously underserved. This can drive revenue growth and enhance brand reputation by demonstrating a commitment to diversity and social responsibility. Additionally, digital tools can streamline internal processes, improve efficiency, and reduce costs, leading to overall operational improvements and competitive advantages in the market.

- o **Contributing to Risk Management:** Digitalization can also mitigate certain risks for corporations. By diversifying their customer base through inclusive practices, companies can reduce dependency on specific market segments, thus lowering exposure to economic downturns or fluctuations. Moreover, by leveraging digital platforms for data analytics and real-time monitoring, corporations can better anticipate and respond to emerging risks, such as cybersecurity threats or supply chain disruptions. This proactive approach to risk management enhances organizational resilience and safeguards long-term sustainability

Digital tools play a dual role in fostering access and inclusion while offering tangible benefits for corporations and contributing to robust risk management practices. By embracing digitalization and prioritizing inclusive strategies, companies can drive positive social impact while simultaneously strengthening their bottom line and future-proofing their business operations.

6) https://www.rimes.int - An advanced early warning system (EWS) utilizes cutting-edge technology to collect and analyze climate data, predicting disaster risks. It customizes alerts for each country, integrating data into a centralized platform accessible to authorities and the public. Continuous innovation ensures effectiveness and responsiveness, enhancing disaster preparedness and resilience.

7) Think Blue Data – https://thinkbluedata.com

8) Plan International https://plan-international.org/thailand/ Applying technology in Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) often lacks inclusiveness, particularly regarding the involvement of women in leading roles in managing disasters.

While there are significant opportunities for economic growth and collaboration, addressing digital disparities and ensuring inclusive growth are essential challenges that must be addressed. Policy initiatives such as the ANTIGA upgrade goods agreement and the ASEAN Development Economic Agreement demonstrate a commitment to promoting sustainable development and economic cooperation within the region. Moving forward, continued cooperation, innovation, and investment in digital infrastructure and inclusive policies will be key to unlocking the region's full potential and achieving sustainable development goals.

Three pivotal ESCAP partnership initiatives aim to enhance economic cooperation and technological empowerment in the region:

1) **Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation**: Hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan, this conference in Astana from 3 to 5 September aims to foster digital cooperation and transformation. Ministers are expected to agree on a visionary declaration, fostering momentum for digital efforts and providing a platform for strategic collaborations among stakeholders.

2) **Green Development in North and Central Asia**: ESCAP, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), supports the Green Development of member States in North and Central Asia under the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). This initiative addresses the challenges of global climate change while promoting sustainable development.

3) **Accelerating SDG Implementation through Digital Innovations**: Anticipated adoption of a pivotal resolution reflects collective dedication to accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through digital innovations. It reaffirms Asia and the Pacific's role as a burgeoning hub of digital innovation, emphasizing the region's commitment to achieving sustainable development objectives.