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Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
and Executive Secretary of ESCAP**

Remarks (as prepared for delivery)

2024 ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment

**7. Means of implementation: digital cooperation, STI, capacity building for
national efforts to advance the SDG**

**Thursday, 16 May 2024
10:00 – 11:30 hrs.**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

It is my honour to speak at the ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment.

While we are facing economic, social and environmental risks of unseen complexity and uncertainty, strategic competition has reshaped trade, finance and technology flows as well as economic cooperation.

Climate change also remains our most defining challenge, with last year the warmest the world has recorded.

Yet, the Asia-Pacific region has remained remarkably **resilient and resourceful**. Building on its sociodemographic profile, digitally literate youth, economies of scale and rapidly expanding access to digital infrastructure, the Asia-Pacific region has emerged as a hub of digital innovation, while remaining the most digitally divided region.

Digital innovations are transforming **urban development**, financial inclusion, the circular economy and public service delivery. The value of digital transactions in the finance sector is projected to reach \$6.7 trillion by 2026.

At its 80th session in April, which had the theme “Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific,” the Commission adopted a resolution encouraging all members and associate members to strengthen regional and multistakeholder cooperation for the promotion of research and development, fostering human development and a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship for expediting implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Commission further recognized the need to promote dialogue and technical cooperation, affirming that there are different approaches and tools available to each country in accordance with national circumstances and legal frameworks for augmenting the scale and positive impact of digital innovations, noting in particular countries in special situations.

In this regard, capacity building involving partnerships with governments, academic institutions and enterprises is also vital for building skills in demand.

An example is Kartu Prakerja, an online program developed by the Government of Indonesia in partnership with ESCAP. It boosts job skills development and entrepreneurial capabilities of diverse groups, including micro and small business owners, women, and persons with disabilities.

To nurture the growth of these digital innovations, regional cooperation is imperative to help harmonize policy frameworks.

With this in mind, the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation, to be held in September in Kazakhstan, will consider a blueprint for such cooperation.

As we move forward, we must embrace emerging digital innovation platforms and intelligently deploy and govern digital solutions, based on common understanding, shared approaches and collaborative governance.

This is the opportunity in front of us.

Thank you.