

**Country statement of the Republic of Azerbaijan,
by Mr. Anar Huseynov, Deputy Director of Economic Cooperation and
Development Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the
ministerial segment of the 72nd session of the ESCAP entitled "Science,
technology and innovation for sustainable development"**

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*Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

With the aim of timely and effective achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, currently, Azerbaijan successfully implements its sustainable development strategy, entitled "Azerbaijan 2020: vision for the future", that will ensure country's transition from a resource based economy to more diversified, competitive, as well as innovative and knowledge based economy.

As one of the fast growing economies of the world and located at the crossroad of strategic international transport corridors, Azerbaijan has achieved impressive results in the field of sustainable development. Despite global economic and financial crises, in 2015, Azerbaijan registered a positive economic growth, especially in the non-oil sector, and managed to become a pioneer in the region by initiating a number of strategic trans-regional transport, information-communication technologies (ICT) and energy projects such as Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway link, the new Baku International Sea Trade Port, Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway and the Southern Gas Corridor. The growth rate, according to the forecast of the international economic and financial institutions, will retain its dynamics for the upcoming years as well and the above-mentioned projects will promote inter and intra-regional trade and further contribute to the sustainable development of the ESCAP region and beyond.

Science, technology and innovation (STI) has always been at the top of the sustainable development agenda of our government. In this context, I would like to highlight several key statistics, regarding STI, reflected in the reports of the UN specialized agencies and programmes such as ITU, WIPO, UNDP, UNCTAD, as well as World Economic Forum:

- Mobile network coverage rank: 1
- Adult literacy rate: 99.8%
- Adult literacy rate rank: 3
- Importance of ICTs to government's vision rank: 9
- Government's success in ICT promotion rank: 10
- ICT use and government efficiency rank: 10

- ICTs and organization model creation rank: 26
- ICTs and business model creation rank: 40
- Capacity for innovation rank: 43
- ICT use rank: 49
- Networked readiness index rank: 57
- ICT access rank: 65
- ICT development index rank: 67
- Human development index rank: 78
- Global innovation index rank: 93
- Internet users: 61% of the population
- Percentage of households with computer: 51,7%
- Percentage of households with internet: 54,6%
- B2C (business to consumer) e-commerce index value: 50.5

In order to continue turning “black gold” into “human gold”, as well as boost human capital, education, research and science will remain the priority areas of our sustainable development. Azerbaijan has achieved universal primary education and fulfilled the relevant UN Millennium Development Goal well ahead of time. Based on the State Programme on Youth Education Abroad, during 2007-2015, thousands of Azerbaijani students were sent to study at the leading universities of world and all their expenses were totally financed by the government. The Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, the highest scientific institution in Azerbaijan, carries out fundamental research in the leading fields of natural, technological and social sciences and plays a leading role in creating new technologies and methodologies. During last years, a series of internationally significant scientific results have been achieved in various major fields of science, especially through close cooperation with different scientific organizations throughout the world.

According to ESCAP studies, Azerbaijan has the most robust cross-border connectivity, a highly developed ICT sector among the landlocked developing countries and has improved its connectivity level by more than 30%. Hence, in order to formulate high-tech, innovative and digital economy, Azerbaijan pays utmost importance to the development of ICT. At the moment, after the energy sector, development of ICT sector was announced as the 2nd priority field in Azerbaijan and is pioneering in the application of innovation. ICT is also the 2nd most profitable sector of the national economy and 2nd largest recipient of foreign investment after the oil and gas industry in Azerbaijan. The State Fund for ICT Development was established to stimulate the development of ICT, innovations, as well as to provide financial support for the expansion of operative scientific researches. Overall, ICT development has been put at the forefront of sustainable development agenda as Azerbaijan seeks to become an ICT locomotive of the region. The High-Tech Park was established in the country in order to promote research and development, application of cutting-edge technologies, development of ICT. Our mission is to maintain constant development of the economic and competitive market in the science and ICT sphere. Moreover, Azerbaijan has joined Information Technology Agreement of the World Trade Organization and completely eliminated tariffs on relevant ICT products to boost high-tech

manufacturing. As a result, Azerbaijan emerges as an important ICT transit hub for the region, especially through the prospective implementation of UN General Assembly-supported Trans Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM) initiative. TASIM will contribute to the success of the Asia-Pacific Information Super Highway, help build broadband connectivity, promote development of ICT infrastructure and e-commerce across Eurasia and will further contribute to bridging the digital divide well beyond the boundaries of the immediate region.

Significant results have also been achieved in the use of intellectual property to foster the innovative development of the country. Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the promotion, protection and enforcement of intellectual property (IP) rights, as well as pays a great attention to the innovation and creativity. The country is party to several international agreements concerning the protection of IP and successfully cooperates with the World Intellectual Property Organization. During recent years innovative development of the country took high speed, the country managed to formulate a proper legislation, administrative and judicial system to protect intangible heritage in accordance with international standards, the share of IP-based industry significantly increased in the GDP and the number of filed patent applications by innovators considerably rose.

I would be remiss if I did not mention an important challenge for my country to be able to reap the benefits of sustainable development. This challenge is being linked to the ongoing occupation by Armenia of the territories of Azerbaijan that has had a heavy human toll, led to the destruction of considerable parts of the country's ICT, transport and energy infrastructure and continues to pose a serious socio-economic burden.

I would like to conclude by stressing that we consider ESCAP as a reliable partner which can help us in realization of our sustainable development objectives and are looking forward to closer cooperation between Azerbaijan and ESCAP in contributing to the prosperity in the Asia and Pacific region.

I thank you for your attention!

