

STATEMENT BY MR. GANKHUYAG DAMBYN,
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OF MONGOLIA
AT THE PLENARY OF THE 72ND SESSION OF ESCAP

Bangkok, 18 May 2016

Mr. Chair,
Madame Executive Secretary,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by joining the previous speakers in extending our sincere congratulations to you on your unanimous election as Chair of the 72nd session of the Commission and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in and support to the discharge of your onerous duties.

Mr. Chair,

This session of the Commission is being held at a critical juncture as the member States of Asia and the Pacific embark on the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Important discussions and events in the region have laid a sound basis for our today's deliberations on how to harness the potential of Asia and the Pacific towards achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Here, I wish to highlight the first regional follow-up dialogue on financing for development, and the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development resulting, *inter alia*, in a consensus on the need for a regional tax forum, a new regional infrastructure financing forum and a regional road map for implementing the SDGs. I look forward to a lively discussion on ways and means of operationalizing these and other relevant initiatives at this session.

Mr. Chair,

With adequate resources, renewed commitment and intensified collective action the SDGs can and must be achieved. It goes without saying that our journey ahead will not be smooth and easy. The world has already been grappling with the multiple and interrelated challenges, including the economic slowdown, volatile energy and food prices and ongoing concerns over the food security, as well as the increasing

challenges posed by climate change. Their combined effects have reversed hard-earned development gains thus heightening vulnerabilities and inequalities in many developing countries.

To withstand these and other emerging challenges an effective regional partnership for development ought to be enhanced. A partnership that recognizes national ownership and leadership, a partnership that delivers on commitments already made, including at Addis Ababa, Sendai and Paris, a partnership that takes into account the special needs of and challenges faced by the vulnerable group of countries, including the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs).

The International Think Tank (ITT) for the Landlocked Developing Countries, launched in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia back in 2009, will be serving as a center of excellence by using top-quality research and advocacy to build their capacity to benefit from international trade. However, for the ITT to fully use its potential, the Multilateral Agreement on its establishment needs to enter into force. Hence, I would like to urge the Asian LLDCs that have not yet done so to accede to the Multilateral Agreement at their earliest possibility.

Last April, our Ministry together with the ITT and UN Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDs hosted a national workshop on mainstreaming the Vienna Program of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 into national and sectoral development plans. In this regard, we look forward to our continued cooperation with the Commission and also thank the Secretariat for its valuable input in the workshop's deliberations.

Last July Mongolia, China and Russia signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Establishment of the Economic Corridor to simplify the cross-border trade, facilitate trade and investment and implement infrastructure projects to interlink markets of the three countries. The projects to be implemented within the framework of this corridor will be developed in line with Mongolia's "Steppe route", China's "Silk Road Economic Belt" and Russia's "Eurasian Economic Union" initiatives. Our relevant ministries are currently finalizing the program on the Establishment of the Economic Corridor, which includes more than 30 joint projects. In this connection, I also wish to extend our gratitude to the ESCAP for facilitating

the development of the Trilateral Transit Agreement along the Asian Highway network.

Mr. Chair,

The experience of MDGs implementation around the world seems to reveal the fact that sustained economic growth *per se* is not sufficient. It should enable everyone, in particular the poor, to participate and benefit from economic opportunities and should lead to job creation, and be complemented by effective social policy. Mongolia, for one, is endeavoring to implement such a policy.

Mongolia's 2030 Sustainable Development Vision was adopted by the Parliament earlier this year. By 2030, the Development Vision envisages, *inter alia*, eradication of poverty in all its forms, sustaining an annual economic growth at least at 6.6%, securing no less than 80 % of the total population as middle-or high-income strata through reducing income inequality and ensuring citizen's participation, improved human development through quality educational and health services, ensuring ecological balance and green development while building effective, transparent governance institutions. The Vision was developed in line with the global sustainable development goals along the three core pillars.

Boosting productive employment, especially among the youth, through supporting job creation in labor-intensive industries is a high priority of my Government. Over the recent years the Government has taken a host of measures to channel more investment into vocational schools to provide training for rural youth. Youth employment is inextricably linked to education reform, including improved access to all levels of education and better quality of vocational and tertiary education and realigning these to the demands of the labor market.

In promoting equitable distribution of income and opportunities, and to reach more effectively those in need, my Government will pay special attention to better targeting government interventions to strengthen health systems, improve educational opportunities, generate employment, support nutrition, and enhance social protection of the population.

Investment in rural development is crucial for sustaining the livelihood of some 40 percent of the population which live off nomadic livestock-breeding, a highly climate-and weather-sensitive activity.

Serious problems of land degradation, especially desertification and overgrazing, deforestation, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity and urban air pollution are causes for concern. The impact of climate change on land conditions in Mongolia is unmistakable; desertification has affected some 80 percent of our land and water scarcity is a growing problem, and when coupled with natural disasters it directly threatens the human security of those affected.

Mr. Chairman,

Challenges in meeting the SDGs are many, so building enduring partnerships is essential for their effective implementation. This should involve local governments, the national government, the private sector and civil society at home, and our development international partners, both bilateral and multilateral. Only by working together - while holding ourselves mutually accountable – will we be able to deliver tangible and sustainable results.

Thank you for your attention.