

VIDEOBOODSCHAP UNESCAP 80th SESSION COMMISSION

“Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific”

- It is a pleasure and an honor to join you virtually today during the 80th Commission Session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.
- It is evident that the Indo-Pacific region is a key region in the world, and the economic growth in this region over the years is undeniable. Moreover, countries in this region are valuable and essential partners in overcoming global challenges: in particular in the realm of stability and security, climate, health, climate and sustainable development.
- Digital innovation plays a crucial role in tackling global challenges as well, and the theme of this year’s session is therefore also extremely relevant.
- As one of only two EU members of UN-ESCAP, I am grateful for the opportunity to set out the vision of the Netherlands on crucial developments here in the Indo-Pacific region as well as in Europe.
- Europe and the Netherlands are very much committed to contribute to sustainable economic growth, economic and social equality and security in the region. These are also the main pillars of our national Indo-Pacific Strategy and the EU Strategy “*Connecting Europe and Asia.*”
- Together with Germany and France, the Netherlands has been in the forefront of countries that stressed for the importance of an EU Indo-Pacific strategy and closer engagement of the EU with the Indo-Pacific region on a broad agenda.
- We also place great importance on digitalization, both on the opportunities it provides and the threats that come with it. Last year, we published our first ever International Cyber Strategy. As we note in our strategy, digitalization has been the engine driving our development over the past few decades.
- It has also allowed us to become evermore interconnected, and we see the need to join hands with the Indo-Pacific region to ensure stability, security, inclusive, sustainable development and protect the rules based international order, open supply chains and our economies.
- Developments in the Indo-Pacific are of direct relevance to Europe, and vice versa. And we continue to find each other to discuss broader cooperation, such as earlier this year at the 3rd EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum in Brussels.

- In this day and age, we are faced with more challenges than ever. Russia has continued its illegal war with Ukraine, and over the past 6 months the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has continued to worsen.
- A threat that affects us all that cannot be forgotten, is of course climate change. As noted in the recent ESCAP publication, progress on many of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals has been alarmingly slow at both the global and regional levels. Digital innovation can aid us on catching up on lost time. Indeed, Asia and the Pacific is at the forefront of a global digital transformation. As a hub for digitally-driven innovations, the region is invaluable to the Netherlands and the EU and has the potential to accelerate sustainable development
- During the 79th ESCAP Session of the Commission last year, the Netherlands participated in the Climate Solutions Fair focusing on Hydroinformatics for Climate-Risk Reduction.
- This year, as the co-Chair of the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action, the Netherlands is proud to co-sponsor a side event that focuses on accelerating financing for climate action. This side-event will dive deeper into perspectives from ESCAP member States on the possibilities and challenges in implementing the Helsinki Principles in the region, and how regional cooperation and peer-learning could further accelerate the financing of climate action.
- Cooperation is key, now more than ever. The Netherlands looks very much forward to continue to strengthen our cooperation with the Indo-Pacific on a bilateral, EU and of course the UN ESCAP level for the years to come.