

UNEP intervention

80th Commission Session

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

22 to 26 April 2024

ESCAP Hall

Thank you chair.

UNEP welcomes the focus of this year’s Commission on Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

The Ministerial Declaration from the recent UN Environment Assembly meeting held in Nairobi earlier this year highlighted the importance of leveraging digital transformation as an enabling tool to support sustainable economies and societies including through bridging existing digital divides, ensuring equal access to environmental information, harnessing emerging technologies and monitoring how they develop for sustainability.

There are three areas in particular where leveraging digital innovation can help accelerate environmental sustainability.

Firstly, digital technologies can help to paint a true picture of the sustainability of our supply chains and risks to our economies. As companies develop net-zero plans, accurate and real-time datasets can allow us to plan and hold each other accountable. We can use digital technologies such as earth observation and AI to generate environmental intelligence about key risks to our economies and supply chains. This is critical given that presently, less than 60 per cent of environmental indicators of the SDGs can be measured globally.

Secondly, we can use digital technologies to align capital with sustainability. As digital transformation spreads to all corners of global financial markets, it will become easier, cheaper, and more seamless to integrate environmental and climate considerations into costing models, risk assessments and due diligence. This will help the financial sector to step up in the transition to low-carbon portfolios and compare the environment, social and governance performance of different companies and sectors. And it will also help to fight against greenwashing by bringing transparency – benefiting people, companies and the planet in the long-run.

Thirdly, we can use digital technologies to influence consumer choices on sustainability. Two billion consumers are now on e-commerce platforms. We can use digital platforms and algorithms to help make sustainability the preferred choice.

I would like to end by highlighting the Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability known as ‘CODES’ for short. The coalition aims to help reorient and prioritize the application of digital

technologies to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution by embedding sustainability in all aspects of digitalization. This includes building inclusive processes to define standards and governance frameworks for digital sustainability, allocating the necessary resources and infrastructure, and identifying opportunities to reduce potential harms or risks from digitalization.

Thank you.