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**Address by Dr. Pornchai Danvivathana
Secretary General, Asia Cooperation Dialogue
At Panel Session on Ensuring Food Security in a Changed Environment in Asia
“Food Security and Digitalization in the ACD’s Perspective”
Nur-Sultan
Republic of Kazakhstan
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***Your Excellency Mr. Raimbek Batalov, Chairman of the CICA Business Council Board,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Your Excellency for the cordial invitation extended to me to participate in the Fifth Plenary Session of CICA Business Council and panel in the Seventh CICA Business Forum in this beautiful city of Nur-Sultan. I take this opportunity to commend CICA Secretariat for the continued efforts in placing importance in the field of digitalization in various areas.

Excellencies,

We know that food security is a problem for humankind, but we have just experienced its severity, particularly when many countries have imposed export bans on agricultural produce. COVID-19 made an alarming signal when supply chains were disrupted. Many countries have come up with their own short-term strategy, aiming to control high global food prices in order to avoid hunger and prevent inflation. Digital infrastructure may come into play as it could promote e-commerce

and ascertain up-to-date and accurate database for the benefit of farmers and agriculturists, particularly those in remote areas or areas of difficult accessibility.

In this context, malnutrition is an issue related to food security. All governments have their own agenda to ensure that their people have access to staple food on a daily basis. That being the case, staple food should be nutritious, hygienic and made available in the market at all times. In addition, one needs to consider also the issue of water security since all walks of life need clean water for drinking and consuming in many aspects. According to Goal 6 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, countries are required to achieve availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. It appears that we may be far below the target of SDG 6, and need to double or even triple our efforts in reaching such goal. It is not only the responsibility of policy makers or the public sector, but also the private sector and people to join hands together for that purpose. Needless to say that digitalization can play an important role in the management of affordable and sustainable access to food and water security in the long run so that improved nutrition and sanitation of food and water may not be compromised. On top of that, investments on state-of-the-art technology, including digitalization, for better productivity of agricultural produce, particularly staple food, should be promoted in such a manner that corresponds with SDGs. Obviously, this is where inputs from the private sector and businessmen would have an immediate effect as far as investments are concerned.

At this juncture, I would like to refer to, as an example, the discussion of the Experts Meeting in the CICA framework on promoting cooperation in digitalization of transport and logistics operations, held in September 2021 in the Republic of Azerbaijan, because it showed how serious CICA members had taken up this issue for consideration, which in my view should be amplified, as the case may be.

Excellencies,

As far as the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, or ACD, is concerned, we place importance in the interrelations of food, water, and energy security. We believe that food security should not be considered in isolation of water security. That is why food and water security is one of the pillars

of cooperation within the ACD framework. The outcome of discussion at this forum will certainly be useful for further development of ideas and implementation of ACD Member States in the area of food security and digitalization.

The changing environment in Asia warrants all countries within and outside Asia to consider improving the quality of logistics for timely delivery or for movement of goods, commodities and people. E-commerce is found useful and effective for international trade globally, particularly during the pandemic. I have noticed that more digital applications or platforms have been developed, with more accurate real-time tracking features, as well as more frequent uses of drones. However, we need to make sure that such advance technology may not be used with ill-intent or for illegal trafficking.

The other point I would like to touch upon is the fact that digitalization also helps increase market access and improves data analysis for the purpose of efficient planning and harvesting, which would lead to higher productivity. Perhaps, this situation invites a wide range of participation by educational institutions to play their role since their curricula should be designed for training or coaching people to upgrade their skills and mindset in such a manner that digitalization can be an effective tool to promote e-commerce and food security at the same time. I have to emphasize once again that both public and private sectors, as well as civil society, should work together in this regard for the benefit of people in their respective countries.

Excellencies,

Food security concerns a better livelihood of people. The topic under discussion today relates to the betterment of people. I trust this Business Forum will be a platform for sharing expertise and facilitating public awareness of how food security and digitalization can complement and supplement each other. With that, I am glad to be part of today's endeavor.

Thank you very much.