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Agenda item 3: General Debate

(a) Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels

(b) Review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Statement by

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Your Excellency Mr. Courtenay Rattray, Chair of the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen

Thank you for giving the floor to ESCAP.

The Asia-Pacific region is undergoing profound demographic shifts with major implications for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The demographics of the region are changing, now characterised by declining fertility, increasing levels of urbanization and a large and growing number of internal and international migrants. These changes are taking place at varying speeds and times. They have produced both the world's largest youth population and its fastest ageing population. In 2018 the region has become majority-urban. The region is also both the destination and origin of the largest South-South migration flow in the world. These demographic changes are occurring while the region is undergoing profound economic and social changes: Asia-Pacific has emerged as the world's fastest growing economic region. It leads the world in poverty reduction, yet continues to fall behind in terms of social protection and reduction of extreme poverty.

Asian and Pacific countries have long recognised the importance of addressing population issues in the context of sustainable development. Since 1967, the Asian and Pacific Population Conference has been a statutory body of the Commission, whose decennial meetings have enabled the region to advance dialogue on key population and development issues, and

supported engagement of Member States and the region in the International Conference on Population and Development and its regular reviews and appraisals.

As a result of these conferences, countries have prioritised efforts to address region-specific issues and developed appropriate solutions to pressing concerns such as ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights; reducing gender inequalities; harnessing the benefits of age-structural transformations; promoting resilience to climate change; improving the quantity and quality of population data and analysis; and ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration.

However, limited capacity, growing inequality and climate change and related natural disasters have hampered progress and prevented equal enjoyment of the results achieved, putting many of the region's gains at risk.

Mr. Chair,

It is in this context that countries took part in the Midterm Review of the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development in Bangkok from 28-30 November 2018, under the able leadership of Dr. Juan Antonio Perez III, Under Secretary and Executive Director of the Philippines Commission on Population and Development.

The Meeting reviewed the implementation of the policy directions and priority actions identified in the 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration, which provided region-specific guidance on population and development beyond 2014. It also highlighted mutually-reinforcing synergies between this Declaration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Benefiting from inclusive national consultations prior to the Meeting; inputs from academics, civil society, and representatives of other UN entities; and the substantive support of the joint ESCAP-UNFPA secretariat, member States identified areas of progress, residual challenges and emerging issues.

In their efforts to secure the rights and sustainable development of their populations, Member States recognised the importance of ensuring that no one was left behind and throughout the Meeting and the Chair's Summary they emphasised the importance of focusing policy and programmatic interventions on marginalised groups, older persons, women, migrants and young people. Member States further identified the need to develop a regional monitoring framework to track further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the Ministerial Declaration.

Ultimately, member States reiterated their commitment to achieving inclusive, rights-based and people-centred sustainable development. In this regard they recognised the crucial role of the policy directions and priority actions of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development as providing region-specific guidance as appropriate to further implementation of the Programme of Action, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. Chair,

ESCAP, too, reaffirms its commitment to its member States to support their efforts to further implement the Programme of Action at the regional level in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

ESCAP will continue supporting research on the latest population trends and their links to sustainable development; carrying out capacity-building; and serving as a regional, open and transparent platform to help promote dialogue and cooperation, in particular by convening the seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference.

In this regard, Mr. Chair, let me highlight ESCAP's work with ECA on the demographic dividend, its capacity-building work on population ageing with a focus on developing an active ageing index for ASEAN countries and conducting research on how ICTs can be used to improve the situation of older persons. ESCAP's latest population data sheet highlights key demographic statistics. It has been distributed outside this meeting room. ESCAP is also exploring opportunities to strengthen its work on international migration focusing on South-South cooperation and capacity-development on migration data.

In response to the call of Member States, ESCAP and UNFPA will collaborate on development of an SDG-based monitoring framework on the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration of the Midterm Review. It will ensure that this framework highlights synergies with the 2030 Agenda and that it does not impose additional reporting burdens on countries. It will seek advice from experts on this framework later this year. With this framework, Member States will be able to monitor the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD at the regional level and the Ministerial Declaration regularly and inform this Commission about progress, lessons learned and remaining challenges.

In this regard, ESCAP would also like to recognise the productive partnership it enjoys with all stakeholders engaged in implementation of the Programme of Action in the region. At ESCAP we value our close and collaborative relationship with UNFPA; our strong linkages with civil society; and the support of academia. We look forward to working with our partners in supporting the further implementation of rights-based and sustainable linkages between population and development in Asia and the Pacific in the years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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