Agenda item 10 – Towards a shared vision of universal and responsive Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems that facilitate the realization of rights and support good governance, health and development.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific for extending this invitation to the Republic of Maldives to participate in this very important multilateral conference. This platform has provided us with the opportunities to exchange creative ideas and allowed us to engage in important dialogues across borders with one goal in mind - working towards a shared vision of having a universal and responsive Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system in this region.

Maldives has always maintained that civil registration is a basic human right, and in conjecture to that belief, normalized the use of a unique national identifier for each citizen that allows them to access essential services such as education, travel and banking within the country without hassle. The introduction of the social health insurance scheme in 2012 further strengthened the reliance on this unique identifier. Having a valid national identity card is a pre-requisite for accessing health care under this scheme. Consequently, this led to additional improvements in timely birth registration, and issuance of national identity cards.

Similar to births, we acknowledge the importance of timely death registration, as this has a direct impact on how the next of kin is able to manage financial and family circumstances and affairs of the person who has passed away. Accordingly, this led to the implementation of the national death registration policy with the enactment of the 1992 “vital registration” legislation, which made it mandatory to have a valid death certificate to perform the burial processes. Post enactment, the Maldives Statistics Bureau noted a significant rise in death registrations across the Maldives.

Additionally, we in the Maldives, recognise the need for our health sector to be more proactive in engaging with relevant stakeholders when working towards improving the coverage for national birth and death registrations. One such example is the revised Birth & Death Registration Bill, which is the fruits of labour of a multi-sectoral collaborative effort. This revised bill is built on lessons learnt over the past three decades and addresses critical
gaps identified through inter-sectoral dialogues over a long and dedicated period of time. I am pleased to note that the bill has been submitted to the Parliament for debate.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the Ministry of health is committed to playing a key role in generating timely vital statistics, and tracking and publishing all-cause mortalities across the country. Even during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the team dedicated to health statistics and information within the Ministry, worked with relevant parties to ensure that there was no disruption in updating birth and death records in the national system. However, we must not ignore the challenges we faced during the pandemic, and continue to face even today, when ensuring the quality of the “cause-of-death” information generated through the medical certification processes.

To conclude, my deepest gratitude goes to our partner agencies for the support given to the Maldives in developing our Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system. It is crucial, however, that this support continues, as small and developing states such as ours, require further assistance in streamlining our CRVS system and improve the quality of information generated, especially in relation to the cause of deaths across the country. On that note, I look forward to working with our partner agencies and countries as we move towards achieving a shared vision.

Thank you.