- Thank you chair

- I wish to express Australia’s appreciation to UNESCAP and UNFPA for convening this important Conference.

  o Your work remains central to driving a better future for all.

- The Ministerial Declaration we jointly adopted at the 2013 Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC) was inspirational – pushing us forward, helping to make our people and countries stronger.

  o We are pleased to join representatives from around this region, to reflect on our collective progress in implementing the Declaration.

- This process, which also stands as the regional review of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), is critical to guiding continued progress on issues of fundamental importance that lay at the heart of both documents:

  o better health, sustainable development, the realisation of universal human rights for all and shared stability and prosperity.

- We value the contribution this Conference can make to ICPD’s 30th anniversary and a successful 2024 Commission on Population and Development by sharing successes and identifying areas for increased action.

  o Much has been achieved – though much remains to be done - to fully realise the ICPD Program of Action and agreed follow up actions.

  o While ICPD remains our anchor, we need to shape a progressive forward agenda for our region that is fit for purpose in changing circumstances.

- Globally and in our region, we have our largest ever cohort of young people, and some countries will soon have their largest cohort of working aged people.
if their health, education, empowerment and human rights are fully realised now, they would represent extraordinary human capital - capable of driving economic and social transformation resulting in accelerated inclusive development.

- Full implementation of the 2013 Declaration will help ensure we fully meet the needs of our populations through:

  o lives saved and strengthened;
  o improved, holistic education enabling people to make informed decisions regarding their own bodies and protect their health;
  o reduced health costs and economic losses due to ill health;
  o full equality for women and girls, with safer, better lives

- Recently, Australia has established a number of initiatives to further realise the Declaration and the ICPD. This includes:

  o An Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee to provide independent advice to Government before every Federal Budget on economic inclusion and tackling disadvantage.

  o A National Women’s Health Strategy 2020-2030 which sets out an inclusive national approach to improving health outcomes for all women and girls, and reducing inequities.

    ▪ The Strategy acknowledges that good sexual and reproductive health is fundamental to overall health across every life stage and seeks to improve access to services, information and education.

  o A National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality to guide whole-of-community action to make Australia a gender equal country.

    ▪ And development of a new International Gender Equality Strategy to guide our development, humanitarian, trade and security efforts.
- This year we released *Australia’s International Development Policy* with economic growth, climate change, gender equality and social inclusion at its heart.

- We have increased our international development investments in sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, combating gender based violence and harmful practices, including:
  - A $54.7 million investment over 2021-2024 to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services and information reaching nearly 40 million people in 22 Asia Pacific countries;
  - In partnership with six Pacific governments, a $30 million investment over 2018-2023 to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights for all;
  - On-going support to UNFPA’s *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls* initiative, with a $22.5 million grant for 2022-2025.

- Australia remains committed to the full realisation of the 2013 Declaration, the ICPD, its reviews, and related Agenda 2030 targets, and the commitment in the region
  - Which makes a profound contribution to all dimensions of human development.

- Thank you

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