Agenda Item 2: Cook Islands National statement

Wednesday, 15 November 2023 | 2PM SESSION

Review of progress made towards the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific.

--Speech starts---

Honourable Chair, Your Excellencies, Esteemed delegates and distinguished guests,

Kia Orana and warm greetings from the Cook Islands.

Thank you to UNESCAP and UNFPA for organizing this most important regional meeting and to the Royal Kingdom of Thailand for welcoming us here today.

The Cook Islands participated in the voluntary national survey focusing on the 11 priority actions identified in the Ministerial Declaration. Highlights for our country has been the endorsement of our Population Policy, clearly identifying the way forward in achieving our national priorities, which in turn supports regional and global sustainable development goals.

As pacific people, our ancestors expertly navigated the wide expanse of our Blue Continent- Te Moana Nui o Kiva – to seek new opportunities for generations to come. We like to believe that this drive and determination to not only survive but thrive against the odds is built into our DNA as a people. Today, as we face an increasing set of unique challenges, the
Cook Islands remembers that the holistic wellbeing of our people lies at the centre of our national planning and decision making.

The research and evidence has shown us that first, the demographic transition in the Cook Islands is already well-advanced. The Cook Islands does not have the high birth and death rates typical of other countries. That phase was passed two decades ago and without the help of an explicit population policy. This means that the present policy is not directed at reducing the overall birth rate in the context of declining mortality as traditional population policies are. Rather, a more complex set of issues arising from a rapidly changing age structure and dynamic patterns of emigration and immigration have arisen. This together with our nation’s unique 100 year vision towards Turanga Memeitaki or holistic wellbeing – provides a backdrop of aspiration and strong direction towards being people centred and finding solutions from our own traditional knowledge bases. We are now more informed on population trends and dynamics in order to raise awareness of population matters and due to the varied nature of issues covering many thematic areas the Cook Islands has taken a "multi-sector" approach in addressing these challenges.

Although we are pleased with the excellent progress across the 11 priority actions in the Policy development area- challenges still persist in full implementation of these policies and strategies. These include considerations for persons living with disabilities, gender and women’s empowerment, Teenage (adolescent) birth rate, Premature NCD-related mortality and morbidity, Male/female life expectancy gap and premature NCD mortality, creating an enabling environment for families and informed data and information systems. These challenges are not
unique to our own situation and this is why, more than ever, strategic and meaningful partnerships are key.

As the Agenda 2030 looms ahead, we call on the global community to stay focused on what really is at the heart of everything we do, the wellbeing of our current and especially future population. This isn’t merely about economics; it’s about creating lasting wealth that's not just counted in coins, but in well-being, in opportunity, in identity, in stories and traditions, and in the vibrant tapestry of our shared history.

Meitaki maata

------------------------------------Speech ends------------------------------------------

Word count: 523 – 4 minutes.