5. Ruchitha Perera, FPA Sri Lanka

I am Ruchitha Perera, from Sri Lanka. I represent CSOs and youth organizations from 25 countries that convened for a forum ahead of this gathering on 13-14 November.

The Asia and Pacific region is moving from a youthful population to a population structure that has an increased share of older persons and we are witnessing the longevity trend. Older women account for 53% of Asia Pacific’s older persons over the age of 60, rising to 60% over the age of 80. With their longer life expectancy at birth, that share increases with age. This points to the fact that older women generally outnumber older men in Asia and the Pacific. These demographic shifts have implications for health, health care technologies, employment, social protection, income security, quality of life, lifelong learning and long-term care of individuals including during climate, humanitarian and disaster responses.

We call for policies and strategies to take a rights-based, intersectional and whole of life cycle approach to reduce disadvantages for all people living in ageing or aged societies. Older women and LGBTQI+ persons face structural disadvantages in society and we call upon the governments and state parties to comprehensively address issues that surround aging through policy and programmes. The states must foster intergenerational communities and ageing friendly communities that are accessible physically mentally and socially for older persons.

Specific physical, mental and social health needs of the ageing population must be a key priority of the health sector and continuum of healthcare including rights based sexual and reproductive health services must be integrated into the primary healthcare services. States must prioritise comprehensive large scale research on SRHR among older persons and women, and elderly care.

Longevity societies arising as a result of population ageing and lower fertility should be seen as opportunities to build new societies instead of being seen as undermining the current structures of society; this includes non-discrimination against older persons from the LGBTIQ+ community. Persons with Disabilities work and descent communities.

Thank you!