Country Statement of India
Asian and Pacific Population Conference
Agenda Item No. 3 (b) : Health, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

Madam / Mr. Chair,
Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

Government of India recognizes the pivotal importance of a gender sensitive approach to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR). Our rights-based approach to reproductive health has been catalytic towards empowering women, enabling them to take informed decisions about their lives, including menstrual health management, motherhood and spacing of children.

Access to safe sanitation facilities are important for health and wellbeing of all women and girls. To this end, the Government of India has made sanitary napkins 100% exempt from tax. Furthermore, to make available Sanitary Napkins affordable and easily accessible, the price of Sanitary Napkins at government sponsored Jan Aushadhi Suvidha has reduced to Rupee 1 i.e. USD 0.012 per pad.

Madam/Mr. Chair

Lack of proximity to safe, private and functional toilets for women may result in serious health issues which may exacerbate for pregnant women. The Government of India’s flagship Swachh Bharat Mission, Clean India Initiative, has eliminated the practice of open defecation in the country. About 112 million toilets have been constructed across the country, impacting specifically women and girls, whose lives have become safer, healthier and more dignified. This initiative has also generated dignified livelihood opportunities for several women-led SHG groups, which have taken on the responsibility of operation & maintenance of community toilets, public toilets, and solid waste management in a sustainable and profitable manner.

Child marriage is another harmful social practice, especially for young adolescent girls, as it impedes their continuity in education and also impacts their financial independence as well as decision making with regard to their reproductive
health and life choices. Government of India is committed to eliminate child marriages in all its manifestations and dimensions, and several steps have been taken in this direction, including various legal measures promoting girls education, skill development & entrepreneurship and, as well as cash incentives for continuing education for girls that delay marriages.

*Thank you, Chair.*