Country Statement of India
Asian and Pacific Population Conference
On Agenda Item No. 3 (c):
Inequalities, Social Exclusion and Rights

Madam Chair,

India recognizes that women have a vital role to play when it comes to achieving strong, sustainable and inclusive growth. Equality for women in society is also important economically, politically, socially, culturally and environmentally.

The Government of India has been tracking investments towards gender equality and leveraging Gender-Responsive Budgeting as a fiscal tool, to better map and plan the allocation of resources towards driving gender equality across sectors, which has witnessed, 130% decadal increase with the latest allocation for FY 2023-24 crossing over USD 26 billion.

To encourage gainful and sustainable employment of women, numerous enabling provisions have been recently enacted by the Government of India. Maternity leave to employed women have increased from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for the first two children, making India a part of a select group of countries with such a robust provision for expansive paid support for new mothers, including adoptive mothers and recognizing health support during miscarriage.

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act is one of the earliest legislations in the world addressing women’s safety at the workplace in both formal and the informal sectors. The Act even covers the domestic workers under its ambit.
India has created a robust infrastructure for the safety and protection of the rights of all women. A network of 733 One Stop Centres covering entire geographical area of the country have been created to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence and in distress, both in private and public spaces under one roof. Steps have also been taken towards a consolidated National Women’s helpline for emergency and non-emergency support accessible to any woman.

**Madam Chair,**

For the inclusive development of impoverished and marginalized sections in rural areas, nearly 93 million women have been connected with around 8.6 million women’s self-help groups under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission. To help formalize the street vendors in urban areas, PM Street Vendor’s Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme is being implemented to provide collateral free working capital loans. Approximately 5 million street vendors, more than one third of whom are women, have been benefited.

Further, to improve the quality of life for all sections of the population, India has undertaken a multi-pronged approach by linking the sections of the population with banking and financial services, as well as insurance. India has achieved financial inclusion targets foregrounding women, persons with disabilities and aged populations, in just 6 years.

To cite one example, India’s biometric-based unique identification system - ‘Aadhaar’, now covers more than 95% of the country’s population, facilitating access to a range of social protection services.
More than 500 million people, over 55% of whom are women, who previously did not have bank accounts, today have bank accounts. During the COVID-19 pandemic especially, this initiative helped direct benefit transfers to 200 million women.

India has also laid a particular emphasis on ensuring nutrition for women and children. Our Mid-day Meal Programme, which has now been replicated worldwide, is aimed at increasing school enrolment and retention while improving the nutritional status of children, and covers over 120 million children.

India is also implementing the world’s largest affordable housing programme for the poor. Meantime, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is aimed to guarantee the right to work and enhance livelihood security in rural areas.

To conclude, I reiterate the commitment of Government of India towards a rights-based, inclusive, innovative and sustainable approach to population and development.

Thank you,