Mr. Chairman/Madam Chair,
Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,

I extend cordial greetings on behalf of the Government and the people of Kiribati.

Mr. Chairman/Madam Chair,

In commencing my remarks on this distinguished platform for the first time, I join my esteemed colleagues in extending heartfelt congratulations to you and the other members of the bureau. Kiribati is confident that under your capable leadership, the 7th Asia-Pacific Population Conference (APPC7) will be guided to success, and I wish to assure you of Kiribati’s unwavering support.

This statement aligns with the sentiments conveyed by Cook Islands on behalf of the Pacific Small Island States.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin by reiterating and reaffirming Kiribati’s unwavering commitment and support to the spirit and purpose of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Program of Action, including the guiding principles outlined in the Asia Pacific Ministerial Declaration.

As one of the smallest and most isolated UNESCAP Member States, Kiribati relentlessly endeavors to realize the promises and full potential encapsulated in the ICPD Program of Action, the Ministerial Declaration, and the post-2030 Agenda. Our efforts, however, often face setbacks due to the daunting challenges we confront. The adverse impacts of climate change pose a severe threat to Kiribati’s human development, dictating the pace of our implementation efforts. Climate change, indeed, has become an existential threat that permeates every facet of our daily lives, compelling us to seek solutions for a predicament not of our making.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated our challenges, diverting the government’s attention to the immediate crisis. Despite assistance received, it was insufficient to fully address the indirect damage caused, impacting our health facilities and services.

Kiribati is confronted with the complex issues of brain drain, migration, and a high turnover of workers for various reasons. This migration negatively impacts our population growth and human sustainability, as
many Kiribati seek opportunities abroad for reasons such as work security, health concerns, inadequate local infrastructure, and the desire for a secure future for their families. The lack of government initiatives also contributes to this challenge.

Mr. Chairman,

While we wish to delve deeper into our challenges, the constraints of time compel us to be succinct. In the spirit of today's meeting, let me share some of the progress made by Kiribati in realizing the full potential of the ICPD Program of Action and the Ministerial Declaration within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Kiribati boasts a rich and robust culture, tradition, and religion. While accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services poses challenges, the Government adopted guidelines in early 2023 to facilitate access. These guidelines empower our frontline workers through comprehensive training to provide essential services to our communities.

To address gaps and enhance services, Kiribati conducted a survey on health facilities and readiness service assessment. The findings underscore the need to increase the availability of integrated maternal and reproductive health services in line with global standards. This survey identified the imperative for specific training to equip our health workers associated with SRHR with enhanced skills, knowledge, and capacity in this field.

Furthermore, Kiribati has enacted Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) policies, fostering a collective approach to address challenges associated with adolescent health, reproductive health, newborns, and maternal well-being. While this marks a positive stride, we acknowledge that more work is needed.

In 2018, Kiribati introduced Family Life Education for pre-service and in-service teachers, enhancing their capacity and competencies in delivering quality training. This initiative, welcomed by the Ministry of Education, signifies a pivotal step in the right direction.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, Kiribati remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing the goals of the ICPD Program of Action, the Ministerial Declaration, and the broader SDGs. We look forward to collaborative efforts and the shared commitment of this esteemed assembly to overcome the challenges that lie ahead.

I thank you.