Hon Chairperson,

Allow me to congratulate you and the officers of the 7th Asian Pacific Population Conference on your election to this important conference. I wish to extend my delegation’s fullest support to a fruitful outcome to the deliberations.

This 7th APPC comes at a critical juncture as we approach the 30th Anniversary of the ICPD Programme of Action (POA) and lead towards the summit of the future. Amidst the changes that have taken place over the past 29 years, we have made significant progress towards achieving the ICPD POA.

Hon Chairperson,

Sri Lanka has a universal healthcare system that provides free healthcare to its citizens. A wide range of preventive, curative, and rehabilitative services are provided through an extensive network of health institutions, with a hospital accessible every four kilometers. As a result, we have one of the highest life expectancy rates in the region.

Sri Lanka has made great strides in improving maternal and child health. 99% of births are attended by skilled persons. As a result, the Maternal Mortality Ratio is 29.5 per 100,000 live births, and the Infant Mortality Rate is 10.1 per 1000 live births. The achievements in reducing maternal and child mortality rates, have showcased Sri Lanka as a valuable example for the rest of South Asia.
We are focused on improving sexual and reproductive health services and enabling young persons to gain better access to information, particularly on gender, sexuality, contraception, and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV.

The Government of Sri Lanka is currently preparing to conduct the Population and Housing Census in 2024. Efforts have been made to integrate new technologies and enabling wider use of census data to address emerging needs, such as analysis for “leaving no one behind” (LNOB).

Hon Chairperson,

We know that the potential of women and youth must be harnessed in our efforts to achieve sustainable development. Towards this end, the government has in place a policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment and is in the process of enacting relevant legislation.

Inequalities and vulnerabilities especially for women and youth have been exacerbated by natural disasters, and multiple crises. Climate change, rapid urbanization, changing age structures, and migration are a complex web of factors that will have to be addressed, if we are to achieve meaningful progress of our implementation efforts.

Sri Lanka’s population is rapidly ageing. By 2030, 1 in 5 people will be above the age of 60 years. This will affect our political, economic and social structures and have implications for achieving the 2030 Development Agenda. It is imperative that we take the necessary steps to ensure that social, economic and health policies and programmes evolve to address the challenges ahead.

As a nation that has achieved gender parity in education enrollment and high female completion rates, their participation in the labour force has remained low. To ensure the full potential of our population is tapped and to promote gender equality in labour, the Government of Sri Lanka has set up institutional mechanisms, including legal reforms to enable the integration of women into the workforce.

Sri Lanka is dedicated to expediting the ICPD Programme of Action and meeting our Nairobi ICPD Conference pledges. As such,
1. We reaffirm our commitment to reducing preventable maternal mortality to 20 per 100,000 live births by 2030 by providing equitable services to vulnerable populations.

2. The government would enhance the Family Planning Programme by funding advocacy, capacity building, community empowerment, safe commodity distribution and subfertility services. We commit to meet the SRH needs of all population segments, especially the socially disadvantaged.

3. Development policies and programmes must integrate population dynamics and climate action for sustainable development. Sri Lanka will invest in education, healthcare, skills development, inclusive economic growth, and climate adaptation and mitigation.

4. Sri Lanka will prioritize comprehensive sexuality education, in order to empower youth to make educated decisions, prevent sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, prevent gender-based violence, and promote healthy and respectable attitudes.

5. Sri Lanka commits to increase social services to address gender-based violence and expand care for survivors through our Mithuru Piyasas. Further, discriminatory laws will be revised and repealed and social protection systems for marginalized people strengthened.

6. We are strongly committed to make the country's economic and political decision-making processes inclusive of, responsive to, and transformative for women and youth.

7. Sri Lanka recognizes the value and therein commits to strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and technology and sharing of best practices, for addressing implementation challenges.

We pledge our full support towards the 7th APPC commitments, ICPD Programme of Action and to work with the international community to fully realize our aspirations based on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Thank you.