Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time the Republic of the Marshall Islands is taking the floor, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chair of the Seventh Asian Pacific Population Conference. I assure you of our Government’s support during this session.

I acknowledge the presence of distinguished Ministers, esteemed partners from the UN, country representatives, and participants joining us in person and virtually.

Iokwe and greetings to you all from the Marshall Islands.

Our country statement is aligned with the Pacific Islands regional statement delivered by the Cook Islands, but I take this opportunity to highlight our government’s key achievements to date, and outstanding challenges that continue to affect the population dynamic and socio-economic position of the Marshall Islands.

**Reaffirmation**

As we are at the half-way point of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and transition to the 13th anniversary of the ICPD Program of Action, the Republic of the Marshall Islands reaffirms its commitment to the spirit and purpose of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development.

**RMI’s vision aligned to key frameworks**

My country faces a grave challenge of an underdeveloped human capital compounded by the effects of Climate Change and Sea Level Rise, the lingering consequences of our nuclear legacy, and depopulation that affect the sustainable development of our nation. These are overarching issues for the past four decades, since the inception of our nation.

An apex planning document was needed to address these challenges and map out the future that we want for our Country and people. In 2019, our Government adopted the recalibrated National Strategic Plan for the years 2020-2030, which is centered around building resilience in all dimensions to achieve “sustainable, equitable, and measurable development reflecting the priorities and culture of the Marshallese People.” The Strategic Plan is built on five pillars:
(1) Social and Culture  
(2) Environment, Climate Change, and Resilience  
(3) Infrastructure  
(4) Economic Development  
(5) Governance  

These 5 pillars and accompanying 24 strategic areas are in line with the ICPD Program of Action, the 2013 Ministerial Declaration, the 2030 Agenda, and equally as important and regional-specific, the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific, and SAMOA Pathway.

**Review of progress, achievements, good practices**

The population of the Marshall Islands is not at the optimal level of health required for a resilient and thriving country. A 2017 UNICEF health report showed that a third of our children are malnourished and stunted. Radiogenic illnesses that stem from our nuclear legacy have caused our people to suffer from cancers, miscarriages, stunted growth, and deformities, to name a few. Similarly, the loss of use of land due to nuclear contamination and the effects of Sea Level Rise has led to a displaced population and higher dependence on unhealthy imported foods, resulting in the prevalence of NCDs that is prematurely killing off and maiming our citizens. These factors weaken our population, making them vulnerable to disasters and pandemics.

Health, education, and job opportunities are the leading reasons for out and rural-urban migration. Based on the most recent census, nearly half of the population resides in the United States.

To address our underdeveloped human capital and depopulation, the Marshall Islands has invested in strengthening capacity through health, education, and programs that support marginalized communities, including women and girls, and persons with disabilities.

Underscoring the fact that the first 1,000 days of a person’s life is critical to fostering a healthy individual, our government has implemented Early Childhood Development programs. Outreach to mothers, families, and support for our youngest citizens have improved health and quality of life significantly.

To meet the medical needs of our people, we have increased our hospital capacity to 200%, enhanced and strengthened our healthcare workforce on infection prevention and control measures, as well as implemented special programs such as antimicrobial resistance surveillance. To add, we have made progress on SRHR training for our nurses and implementation of a comprehensive package of STI and cervical screening, family planning, and prenatal services.

The RMI Government recognizes education as the key for a resilient and competent human capital. Since 2013, we have adopted legislation, among other policies and programs to strengthen education at all levels, including Special Education, and Technical/Vocational Education and Training. Furthermore, the government has incorporated nuclear legacy and
climate change in our national curriculum to foster future leaders and champions who understand the plight of the Marshallese people.

Programs supported by development partners, such as UNFPA’s assistance in RMI’s drafting of the Youth Policy and Family Life Education Program to teach our young to be better citizens, has allowed our country to fill gaping potholes on the path towards a resilient future.

Social inclusion is critical for holistic nation-building. The Government of the Marshall Islands recognizes the importance of our culture to enhance social efforts. We have utilized the Gender Equality Committee Framework to accelerate gender mainstreaming and raise greater awareness about gender, disability and the more vulnerable in society. The government takes great pride in our partnership with CSOs, such as our Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI), in implementing programs and initiatives to support our marginalized communities. A collaboration at this level has resulted in the launching of the ‘Kōra im An Köl Fund,’ which is a mico-credit and economic empowerment initiative for women entrepreneurs.

Data and statistics are needed for data-driven policies, and it is a challenge the Marshall Islands is not exempted from; however, we are addressing this through implementation of specific policies and programs to improve data collection, monitoring, and evaluation. To date, we have upgraded tools and equipment needed for data collecting and assessment, and further endeavor to build institutional capacity in this area.

This afternoon, I join our sister countries in calling to our development partners and aid donors to recommit their support in the Pacific in the areas of health, education, climate resiliency, women empowerment, and data and statistics.

Thank you for the time.