Thank you, Madam/Mister Chair.

Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, Executive-Director of UNFPA
Excellencies, Honorable Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It was in Cairo in 1994, that we recognized that population is not about numbers, but about people. 30 years later, the Netherlands is still committed to the ICPD agenda. It is still highly relevant.

This year the world population surpassed the 8 billion mark. We can only build a sustainable world when all 8 billion people can exercise their rights, their choices and their responsibilities. And we are not there yet.

During the UNECE regional conference earlier this month in Geneva, Member States highlighted progress towards the ICPD agenda. The conference showed improvements in access to sexual and reproductive health information and services but stressed that certain groups are being left behind. While no one should be left behind. Speakers expressed concern that many women and especially those with a disability are deprived of bodily autonomy. They lack agency to make choices about their bodies and futures.

The celebration of 30 years of ICPD, is a great moment to recommit to the rights-based approach to population dynamics and to make the link to
sustainable development. Freedom of choice, access to comprehensive sexuality
education and the meaningful participation of young people, are key to achieve
the ICPD agenda.

To address the gaps and the challenges we are facing, the starting point must
always be rights. The Netherlands is recommitting itself to the ICPD agenda, as
well as the Asia Pacific ministerial declaration on population and development,
now existing for 10 years. We look forward to continue working in partnership
with governments and civil society organizations in this region, to advance
these agendas.

We would like to congratulate UNESCAP and UNFPA to use this conference as
an opportunity for a constructive exchange on policy experiences in the region.

We hope this week’s discussions will lead to a renewed commitment to ICPD in
the region and a good start for the ICPD+30 celebrations next year.

Thank you.