Chair,

Distinguished Members, Ladies & Gentlemen,

Good morning,

It is indeed a great pleasure and privilege to address this prestigious forum and share Pakistan’s perspective on this important issue.

Let me extend heartiest felicitations and appreciation to UN-ESCAP and UNFPA for organizing this ministerial meeting on Population and Development, providing support to our preparatory consultative process for the ICPD review.

Ladies & Gentlemen;

Pakistan has actively participated in all the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) meetings since 1994.

We recognize the importance of the ever evolving and dynamic debate on population that has taken place within the framework of the ICPD Program of Action.

Human rights, particularly women's access to reproductive and sexual healthcare and their ability to make informed choices about their pregnancies have remained important aspects of this debate.
This gathering today is an important opportunity to reflect upon the progress made and address the gaps identified during our consultative process.

We acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead, in particular in the context of Pakistan that include: (i) high population growth rate; (ii) high maternal and child mortality; (iii) limited access to modern family planning & contraceptives; (iv) gender-based violence; (v) the need to invest more in youth skills; and (vi) quality education.

Reaffirming our commitment to the ICPD Program of Action and the 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration (APMD),

Pakistan aims to continue its journey towards achieving these crucial goals in the realm of reproductive and sexual health rights, particularly for women.

Over the past decade, Pakistan has made significant progress in various areas. We have modest gains in poverty eradication and employment generation, with multidimensional poverty decreasing from 55 percent to 39 percent between 2011-12 and 2018-19.
Our efforts in maternal health have yielded encouraging results, maternal mortality ratio has witnessed a decline from 276 to 186 per 100,000 live births between 2006-07 and 2019.

Pakistan has also witnessed a remarkable increase in facility-based deliveries, rising from 37 percent to 71 percent during the same period.

We are especially pleased with our strides in ensuring access to skilled birth attendants, with an impressive increase to 75 percent of women in 2019, compared to only 52 percent in 2012-13.

Furthermore, our endeavors to achieve universal primary education and promote gender equality have produced favorable outcomes, including improved school completion rates, net attendance ratios, and net enrolment rates.

In addressing population growth, we have developed a fresh National Narrative on high Population Growth to guide policy formulation.

This narrative underscores the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in our journey towards sustainable development.

We have expanded family planning services, offering women more choices for birth spacing.
Pakistan has also been keen to provide relevant services to all, including vulnerable segments such as elderly, people with disabilities and transgender community.

On Legislative front, we have taken steps to address issues such as child marriage through the enactment of Child Marriage Restraint Acts at the federal and provincial levels between 2013 and 2019.

Pakistan is actively pursuing legislation for addressing issues affecting the elderly people.

Nonetheless, we are mindful of the challenges that persist, particularly in enhancing access to family planning.

While our progress in reducing fertility rates and achieving contraceptive prevalence targets may have been slower than anticipated, we are heartened by the decline in the unmet need for contraception from 20 percent (2012-13) to 17 percent (2017-18).

The recent 2023 Population Census reveals a population of 241.5 million, growing at a rate of 2.5 percent.

This data serves as a reminder of the task ahead. It also presents us with an opportunity.
With over 60 percent of our population below the age of 30 years, we have the potential to harness this demographic dividend through strategic investments in human capital.

To achieve our goals, we have outlined a National Action Plan on Population (2019-24), setting impact-level targets for 2025 and 2030.

We are wholeheartedly committed to reaching a contraceptive prevalence rate of 50 percent by 2025 and 60 percent by 2030 while concurrently reducing maternal mortality.

Pakistan has established a ‘self-accountability’ mechanism under the direct oversight of the President of Pakistan, ensuring regular assessments of progress and challenges related to population issues.

Similar task forces have been set up at the provincial level, with the respective Provincial Chief Ministers leading these forums.

**Ladies & Gentlemen;**

Despite contributing negligibly to environmental degradation, Pakistan ranks among the top 10 countries most affected by climate change and extreme weather events.
Frequent climate change induced disasters are creating a profound impact on women and girls, impeding their access to crucial services related to reproductive health and family planning.

These disasters exacerbate issues such as population displacement, poverty, food insecurity, loss of livelihood, and undermining the hard gained development in SRHR over time.

In the face of these challenges, Pakistan is actively devising a comprehensive strategy to enhance resilience and mitigate climate change impacts, thus safeguarding the SRHR needs of its population.

We recognize that addressing the priority areas under population dynamics requires integrated, multi-sectoral approaches and policies. We are cognizant of the fact that the public sector alone cannot achieve set targets, which is why we seek to forge robust partnerships with civil society organizations, private sector, youth networks, and development partners.

These collaborations will ensure a holistic approach to population and sustainable development.
In face of complexity of our goals and challenges we face, such as disparities in capacities, infrastructure limitations, competing priorities, and resource constraints, we view these hurdles as opportunities for innovation and collaboration.

In conclusion, I would, once again, like to reaffirm Pakistan's unwavering commitment to addressing the challenges we face in achieving the goals of the APMD.

We understand that global cooperation and experience sharing are pivotal in this endeavor.

I would like to take this moment to extend our sincere appreciation to our partners, including UNFPA and other development agencies for their continued support and cooperation.

Your support is invaluable, and we pledge to work diligently to scale up best practices and achieve results cost-effectively.

Thank you all for your time and participation here.

Wishing you all a wonderful day ahead.