National Statement by the Republic of Palau

7th Asian and Pacific Population Conference
Organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
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Venue: Bangkok, Thailand

Mr. / Madam Chair

Ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guest,

Allow me to extend our heartfelt greetings and profound gratitude for the honor of participating in the APPC7. As Palau takes the stage for the very first time, we extend our warmest congratulations to you, Mr./Madam Chair, on your well-deserved appointment. Rest assured; Palau stands firmly behind you throughout this pivotal conference.

To kickstart our proceedings, I wish to reiterate Palau's unwavering commitment and endorsement of the principles enshrined in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) program of action, including the Asia Pacific Ministerial Declaration.

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed Chair, our beloved Palau faces multifaceted challenges that span across all sectors, but one issue looms large on our horizon. Palau is experiencing a significant decline in birth rates, with an average of just 211 births per year over the past five years. In 2022, this trend reached a disheartening low, with only 155 live births recorded, marking the lowest figure in a decade. The Palau government has recently initiated a groundbreaking child subsidy program designed to support low-income families, potentially offering a solution to this pressing concern.

In the realm of youth, Palau has witnessed a concerning decrease of approximately 28.1% in its youth population. A particularly alarming issue is the soaring rate of obesity among Palau's young population, currently standing at a staggering 62%. This distressing prevalence can be partly attributed to the limited availability of healthy food options, as many Palauan's struggle to afford nutritious meals. Moreover, this challenge is exacerbated by the significant disparity between Palau's minimum wage, the cost of living, and climate change challenges leading to what some call a "brain drain." If left unchecked, this trend could have far-reaching implications for Palau's overall development.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the Palauan government has proactively enacted legislation allocating 10% of the revenue generated from alcohol and tobacco taxes to fund non-communicable disease (NCD) prevention and health promotion efforts. Furthermore, our government is wholeheartedly committed to reducing NCD risk factors in children and adolescents through comprehensive school-based health programs, aligning with the objectives outlined in our NCD strategic action plan.

Finally, on the critical issue of data and statistics, we acknowledge the limited data available to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges we've outlined today. Despite these anticipated challenges, our dedication remains unwavering. We are committed to exploring innovative approaches, including the integration of new technologies, to fortify our statistical system's longevity. This will enable the reliable and timely provision of high-quality data, thereby contributing to a brighter future for Palau.
In closing, we would like to express our sincere gratitude once again, Mr./Madam Chair, for affording us this platform. I shall conclude my remarks here. Thank you.