Mr./Madam Moderator,

Thank you for this opportunity to deliver this intervention on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States under the supervision of UNFPA Pacific Sub Regional Office including, Cook Islands, Federated State of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Niue, Tokelau and my own country (name).

We commend the invaluable insights and enlightening contribution from the distinguished panelists this morning. Their guiding observations are thought provoking.

Mr./Madam Moderator,

Climate change is the gravest threat to the Blue Pacific continent. It threatens the livelihoods and survival of Pasifika people living in volcanic islands and low lying coral atolls scattered across 15% of the earth’s surface. The Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) including the Pacific SIDS, are uniquely vulnerable to climate
change. When disaster strikes, life changes in an instant. Homes, communities and livelihoods are destroyed, affected populations are forced to flee, often with just the clothes on their backs, without basic necessities such as food, water, hygiene and medical supplies. Global evidence tells us that women and children are up to 14 times more likely than men to die in a disaster.

Also 60 per cent of preventable maternal deaths and 56 per cent of preventable under-5 deaths occur in humanitarian crisis. Furthermore, in these situations, pre-existing gender inequalities are exacerbated. Whether a woman or a newborn baby lives or dies in a humanitarian crisis, is dependent on whether they have access to critical health services, such as emergency obstetric care, sexual and reproductive health services, and a safe space for survivors of violence. Emergencies often limit women’s vital access to contraceptives, and exposes them to an unintended pregnancy. Our health systems need to be strengthened to be more resilient to climate change adversities for the wellbeing of our families, particularly if we are serious about ensuring Universal Health Coverage and adhering to the principle of leaving no one behind. This is compounded by the tsunami of non-communicable diseases which is affecting life expectancy and premature NCD mortality and morbidity throughout the Pacific.

In 2015 our Pacific Health Ministers endorsed the Yanuca Island and KAILA Declaration which prioritized strengthening Climate Change Resilience through Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescents Health in the Pacific.
It is crucial that we move from vision to transformational change at the level of communities, households, couples, and individuals.

It is urgent that we strengthen delivery of required health care and to urgently deploy humanitarian and relief supplies for Reproductive Maternal Newborn Child and Adolescent services including emergency obstetrics care, access to contraceptives, prevention and treatment of STIs, youth SRH services and responses to gender-based violence in health programmes and services in all phases of disasters and humanitarian emergencies is fundamental, before, during and after disasters. Strengthening human resource capacities and building competencies for these services in the health system is equally important.

In addition to ensuring life saving services to women and newborns in humanitarian situations, is the need for data collection and analysis of disaggregated data on vulnerable populations in relation to effects of climate induced disasters on their health, furthermore, that updated disaggregated data is used in vulnerability and adaptation assessments.

Gender-responsive and inclusive climate actions to ensure women and girls, young people, the elderly and marginalized populations are able to exercise their right to be agents and beneficiaries of climate change action and fully participate in shaping these actions and responses. Equally important to draw on their unique traditional adaptation knowledge and local coping strategies in the process.

In Health and SRHR, the unique case of Pacific SIDS must be considered, and integrated and sustainable approaches such as
Reproductive Maternal Newborn and Adolescent health is important to our Small Islands context.

I thank you.