Engagement of civil society organizations and other stakeholders in the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference, 15-17 November 2023

I. Background

In 1994, United Nations Member States adopted the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)\(^1\) in Cairo, Egypt. The Programme of Action, which was extended by the General Assembly in 2010 beyond 2014 (resolution 65/234),\(^2\) takes a people-centered and rights-based approach to sustainable development. It emphasizes that achieving sustainable development requires that interrelationships between population, resources, the environment and social and economic development are fully recognized, properly managed and brought into a harmonious and dynamic balance. Population dynamics are both drivers and outcomes of sustainable development at national and subnational levels, but also at regional and global levels. In order to achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, policies, including population-related policies, should be developed and implemented in order to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations.

Chapter XV of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development discusses partnerships with the non-governmental sector\(^3\) in the implementation of Programme of Action. It recognizes that in many countries, non-governmental organizations have made and are increasingly making important contributions to both population and development activities at all levels. It calls on Governments and intergovernmental organizations to integrate non-governmental organizations and local community groups in their decision-making and facilitate the contribution that these organizations can make at all levels towards the implementation of the Programme of Action. Non-governmental organizations should have a key role in national and international development processes. It also recognizes the important role of the private sector pertaining to population and sustainable development. Chapter XVI on follow-up to the Conference calls on Governments, organizations of the United Nations system and major groups, in particular non-governmental organizations, to disseminate the Programme of Action and work collaboratively on national follow-up, accountability and monitoring.

The 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development\(^4\) called for creating effective partnerships among key stakeholders, including Governments, community-based organizations, civil society, the not for-profit sector and the private sector and coordination mechanisms for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the recommendations of the 2013 Declaration. It also called for the creation of an enabling environment for the participation of civil society and community-based organizations and increased space for constructive dialogue at the local, national and regional levels.

It is in this context that ESCAP and UNFPA are seeking the engagement with non-governmental organizations and the private sector, primarily active at the regional level in the lead-up, during and in

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\(^1\) Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex


\(^3\) Including local, national and international non-governmental organizations.

\(^4\) https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Report%20of%20APP%202013.pdf
follow-up to the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference. Since some organizations in some key areas are primarily active at the national level, they will also be encouraged to participate in the process.

II. Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference, United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok, Thailand, 15-17 November 2023

The Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference will be held in accordance with resolution 74 (XXIII) of 17 April 1967 of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East which established the Conference as a statutory organ of the Commission. The Conference should be convened every ten years synchronizing with the decennial population and related censuses, for the consideration of all aspects of population questions and of their impact on economic and social development. The sixth Conference was held from 16 to 18 September 2013 at ESCAP, and members and associate Members adopted the Asian-Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development.

The Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference will be organized by ESCAP, in collaboration with UNFPA and other regional partners and stakeholders from 15 to 17 November 2023. The intergovernmental meeting will coincide with the 60-year commemoration of the first Asian Population Conference, which was held in 1963 in New Delhi, India, the 30-year regional review of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in Asia and the Pacific, and the 10-year anniversary of the adoption of the 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development. It will also mark the half-way point in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. The Conference will provide the Asia-Pacific input to the global review of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development which will take place at the 57th session of the Commission on Population and Development.

A. Next steps in engaging with stakeholders

A virtual briefing of stakeholders will take place on 30 March 2023. The briefing will coincide with the tenth Asian and Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development to be held at ESCAP from 27 to 30 March 2023. The briefing will provide an opportunity for ESCAP, UNFPA and some of its regional partners to brief stakeholders about the plans for the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference, including forthcoming consultations with stakeholders. It will also include an open Q&A session and help identify entry points for stakeholder for engaging in the process.

Following the briefing, four stakeholder consultations are planned between the second and fourth quarter of 2023, focusing on all priority actions of the 2013 Ministerial Declaration:

- Poverty Eradication and Employment
- Health
- Sexual and Reproductive Health, Services and Rights
- Education
- Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment
- Adolescents and Young People
- Ageing
- International Migration
- Urbanization and Internal Migration
- Population and Sustainable Development
- Data and Statistics

Emerging issues such as the impact of COVID-19; intergenerational solidarity; climate change; and digital transformation will be discussed throughout the consultations. Gender considerations will be mainstreamed.

The consultations will be held virtually.

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To ensure consistency, all consultations will use the same template for the concept note and programme. Stakeholders are encouraged to self-organize these consultations with guidance, support and input from ESCAP and UNFPA to ensure that the consultations align with the overall objectives of the intergovernmental meeting. This would involve the drafting of concept notes, setting the agenda, drafting guiding questions and identifying speakers, moderators and note-takers.

A summary report will be produced following each consultation, which would seek to capture the key issues and recommendations raised in the discussions. In addition, an information paper summarizing all consultations will be drafted by ESCAP and UNFPA which will be submitted to the intergovernmental meeting.

About 6 weeks prior to the intergovernmental meeting, another briefing of stakeholders will be organized on the status of preparations.

ESCAP and UNFPA will also support a CSO Forum, self-organized by CSOs before the intergovernmental meeting.

B. Modalities for stakeholder engagement

ESCAP and UNFPA will facilitate stakeholders being a part of the official agenda of the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference, inter alia, through: (a) participation as expert roundtable panelists and (b) enabling oral interventions in line with the rules of procedure of the Commission. ESCAP and UNFPA will work closely with the CSO Steering Committee of the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference. For the intergovernmental meeting, joint statements by stakeholders are encouraged. Stakeholders are invited to organize side events, including in collaboration with other stakeholders, ESCAP member States, United Nations entities and others.

C. Identifying stakeholders

Between 2021 and early 2023, ESCAP compiled a list of stakeholders working on issues related to population and development in Asia and the Pacific. Given the broad areas of work, these are primarily stakeholders operating at the regional level. In cases where certain areas of work are not covered by regional CSOs, the list also includes stakeholders that are active at national levels. The list of stakeholders has been reviewed by UNFPA. It builds on similar lists that were developed for the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2022 and the 2021 Regional Review of the Global Compact for Migration. It also builds on the list of participants of the 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Population and Development and the 2018 Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Declaration on Population and Development. Importantly, the list of stakeholders will be a living document and the basis for the engagement of stakeholders during the intergovernmental meeting, and it seeks to ensure balance in relation to thematic and geographic representation, scope of mandate and gender.

The CSO Steering Committee comprises a group of CSOs which will work closely with ESCAP and UNFPA in facilitating the inclusive participation of CSOs in the lead-up to, the convening of and in follow-up to the Conference, ensuring that they cover all priority actions of the 2013 Ministerial Declaration. Active participation of stakeholders throughout the preparatory process is important to ensure the most effective engagement possible in the intergovernmental meeting itself. The CSO Steering Committee will self-organize, while ESCAP and UNFPA will be available for any support needed, including to strengthen the strategic positioning of CSOs and heighten their impact.

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