Country statement from Timor-Leste during Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference
Bangkok and online, 15-17 November 2023

Agenda Item 2:

Review of progress made towards the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the PoA of the ICPD

Mr/ Madam Chair …
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Timor-Leste has strong commitment towards the implementation of the program of Action of international conference on population and development (1994) and the Asia and Pacific Ministerial Declaration (2013). The active participation from the relevant line Ministries and public institutions, parliament, civil society organization, women and men, the youth and other vulnerable population such as person with disability and those who claim their right for gender identity and sexual orientation has significantly taking part in their contribution for the development of Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste Recalls the strong linkages between population, poverty reduction and sustainable development and the imperative of placing human rights at the center of the sustainable development of our country;

Since the inception of its independence, Timor-Leste had accomplished progresses, namely;

- Significant improvements towards achieving universal health coverage, particularly by increasing the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of care at the primary healthcare level;
- Increase of life expectancy at birth by about 10 years from 2000 to 2016, reaching 68.9 years for male and 71.7 years for female, as a result of multi-sectoral national policies to promote access to quality prevention, treatment,
care and support for communicable and non-communicable diseases, reducing disparities and health status, mortality and morbidity;

- Full immunization coverage of children reaching nearly 100% at 2 years of age, and the decline of maternal mortality ratio from 745 deaths for every 100,000 live births in 2000 to 195 per 100,000 live births in 2016,

- Significant efforts towards reducing the unmet need for family planning; reducing maternal, newborn and child mortality, and ensuring access to a full range of safe, effective, and high-quality modern contraceptives of choice, including antenatal and postnatal care and prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

- The decline of total fertility rate from 5.7% in 2010 to 4.2% in 2016; the increase in contraceptive prevalence rate from 22% to 26% and the decrease in unmet need for family planning needs from 32% to 25%,

- Access to skilled birth attendants increased from 30% to 57% and the under 5 mortality rates decreased from 64% to 41%.

- Significant strides towards achieving gender equality with 38% of women actively participating in political roles including parliament and leadership positions.

- Lastly several noteworthy successes in terms creation of law enforcement in the areas of ageing with the social security laws such as non-contributive and contributive social scheme; in the areas of international migration the national migration law and asylum law; and in the areas of urbanization and the decentralization laws.

Excellencies
Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the above-mentioned achievements, enormous impediments remain existent. Mindful of the current socio-economic landscape Timor-Leste foresees challenges ahead confronting it as a nation which could potentially be engendered by:
- Illiteracy rate of 32% of young population aged 15 and above
- Only 24% of children below five years of age have access to pre-school education.
- Inadequate infrastructure conditions in the schools posing significant barriers to quality education
- 9.6% of Youth unemployment
- “Brain drain” and decreasing work force as more young people migrating overseas including those affected by human trafficking;  
- High rate of violence against women, precisely 33% of women aged 15-49 experiencing sexual violence;
- Insufficient condition to ensure a comprehensive family planning policy to prevent maternal and infant mortality and morbidity, teenage pregnancy as well as averting from HIV and STI infection specially among the youth.
- High population density in the capital, affecting the conservation and sustainability of resources such as space, food and water; as well as concerns of over urbanization, posing obstacles to solid waste management.
- Insufficient and inefficient policies and programs for social protection including for ageing population;
- Obsolete 2014 data of 41.8% on poverty rates and lack of reliable statistic on ageing population, mortality, international migration, preventing decision makers from making timely and relevant decision in these critical areas.

In light of the situations described above and driven by moral obligation to overcome them, Timor-Leste reaffirms its commitment to:

- Revise and strengthen laws against gender-based violence to provide greater protection and ensure the safety and dignity of all women, people with disabilities, and marginalized groups;
- Encourage and support at least 50% female candidates to run for village chief position, promoting women’s leadership at the grassroots level;
- Recognize and address the interlinkages between gender disparities, violence, and economic inequality, fostering a holistic approach to these interconnected issues;
- Raise awareness through intensive campaigns, engaging society at all levels to challenge and change norms and attitudes towards gender-based violence;
- Establish a comprehensive database for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and incest cases to better understand the extent of the issue and develop targeted interventions;

- Enhance accessibility to information and communication technology (ICT), especially for individuals with disabilities, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for all;

- Conduct updated research to understand the status of key national development indicators (e.g. poverty rates, gender-based violence, education management information system, etc.);

- Allocate sufficient resources for the development of the productive sector, climate change mitigation, and development of the education sector;

- Improve and enforce policies and partnership, particularly by promoting the private sector to accelerate economic development and growth;

- Remove all existing barriers towards universal access to sexual and reproductive health services for all, including adopting legislations that target adolescents and young people;

- Scale up efforts to strengthen stigma-free evidenced-based HIV, prevention, treatment, care and support services, and integrate HIV interventions into the broad SRH services;

- Accelerate the decentralization process and enable economic opportunities in the rural areas.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank UN ESCAPs, UN specialized agencies for their continuing support and guidance. Timor-Leste is convinced that only through a spirit of global solidarity will help all parties overcome the challenges thus accelerating progress towards achieving UN sustainable development goal (SDGs)

Thank you.