Tuvalu National Statement to the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference
Bangkok, 15-17 November 2023

All protocols observed-

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Chair, thank you for the opportunity to address this assembly on-behalf of the Government and the people of Tuvalu.

Mr Chair, for Tuvalu, population dynamics play a vital role in our sustainable development efforts. Tuvalu is characterized by a youthful population. This presents both opportunities and challenges for decision makers.

The challenges include increased migration to the capital, Funafuti leaving their islands under populated. This lack of manpower and youths in the islands has resulted in outer island infrastructure development to being stalled longer than necessarily. The capital city is overcrowded, resulting in increased social challenges including teenage pregnancies, increased unemployment, unhealthy living habits and disconnection from cultural values that are conducive to the peaceful enjoyment of collective living in Tuvalu.

Accessing quality data to facilitate solutions to the challenges or for informing relevant policies is affected by the lack of quality data or in most cases nonexistence of data.

Connectivity whether in technology, maritime or air services are additional challenges for Tuvalu. There are no domestic flights and boat travels between the island takes days, if there is a boat. Cargo boats visit monthly if the weather permits. The only high schools in the country do not have functioning science labs. Most development are effectively implemented on Funafuti and hence the continuous influx of people to the capital adding to overcrowding and socio-economic issues.

But despite the challenges, Tuvalu has seen an increased representation of women in leadership roles. There has been a decrease in neonatal mortality. There is increasing health assistance to address non communicable diseases and setting up of the Inclusive Learning Centre, recognizing and supporting children with special abilities. [Tuvalu Overseas Medical Treatment Scheme (TOMRS)] guarantees equitable access for all Tuvaluans to overseas health services not available in Tuvalu]

Excellencies,

Climate Change poses an existential threat to Tuvalu. The science of climate change shows that Tuvalu may be totally inundated in 50 to 100 years.

However, the impact of Sea Level Rise is affecting the country and has been affecting the country for years. This calls for immediate action.
Beyond the physical implications, climate change disrupts traditional livelihoods such as fishing and agriculture, placing strain on the socio-economic fabric of Tuvalu communities and making food security a core challenge for Tuvalu. The increased frequency and intensity of tropical cyclones amplify the risks of damage to infrastructure and homes.

Excellencies,

Where there is challenges there is also opportunities. *Leave No one Behind*, is an opportunity for humankind, on the national level to engage as one person, elders, youths, people with special abilities, man women and children, (CSO etc) to charter a future for tomorrow’s children ‘so they can live in prosperity, peace and harmony. On the international front, it’s an opportunity for the UN and it’s constituent bodies to make a concerted effort to live and feel the lived experiences of Tuvalu, not by questionnaires or desktop reviews, not by appointing in-country focal points but stationing fully resourced offices in our countries or increasing support for the regional organizations that are in the pacific. An opportunity to get to know us as a person not a just another statistic for then you have already left Tuvalu behind.

Fafetai lasi.