H.E. MR. VARAWUT SILPA-ARCHA
Minister of Social Development and Human Security,
Thailand

Opening remarks
The Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference

15 November 2023 (09:00 – 09:45)
Conference Room 1, United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok
Your Excellency, Madam Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana
(อาร์มีด้า ซาลเซีย อัลฮีซิจ้าบานา), Under-Secretary-General of the United
Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP,
Madam Diene Keita (ไดเง่ เคท่า), United Nations Assistant Secretary-
General and Deputy Executive Director (Programme), UNFPA,
Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Very good morning, สวัสดีครับ.

First of all, I, on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand,
would like to warmly welcome you to the Seventh Asian Pacific Population
Conference held in Bangkok: “the City of Angle,” which is ranked 31st of the
world populous city in 2023. That’s one of the reasons I am very pleased to
join you today to address the issue of population and development. It is
indeed our great honor that Thailand has been the host of the Population
Conference since 2002. In this regard, I would like to express our sincere
appreciation to the United Nations Economic Social Commission for Asia and
the Pacific: UN-ESCAP and the Asia-Pacific Regional Office of the United
Nations Population Fund: UNFPA for their collaborative efforts in organizing
the Conference.
Excellencies,

We all know that the Asia and the Pacific region is the most diverse region of the world and home to 60 per cent of the world’s population. Thus, what happens here will unquestionably have the significant impacts at the global level, especially when we are moving into the stage of global boiling. According to ESCAP population Data Sheet 2022, the population in this region is growing at a declining rate while life expectancy is increasing. And the number of older persons is growing in all subregions. With this data, I consider that our region is at a critical juncture. Even though, during the past decade, we have made extensive progress in overall socio-economic development, in terms of health, poverty eradication, sanitation, nutrition, education, etc., it is undeniable that many member states, including Thailand, are now facing both new and residual challenges and opportunities, such as a shrinking labor force, population ageing, and increased international migration. Many people continue to experience persistent socio-economic inequalities, particularly on gender. It is a matter of fact that the situation has been exacerbated by climate change, pollution, disasters, conflicts, pandemics, and digital transformation.

In many ways, I am certain that this conference will be a watershed opportunity for our collective journey towards sustainable development, particularly when we review the progress made on the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development; we strenuously adopted 10 years ago. It will be a pivotal step for assessing progress, evaluating where we are lagging behind, protecting our gains and
accelerating transformative change, as we enter the decade of action to 2030. This will enable us to obviously understand the key population trends of the region such as population aging and the demographic dividend. Challenges and opportunities would also be unveiled. And it will undoubtedly pave the way towards the appropriate mean in working together for the sustainable future.

For Thailand, the government has invested in policies and strategies that promote sustainable population growth, support families, and create an environment where people can thrive and live long with healthy lives. Our firm and consolidated commitment to Universal Health Coverage since 2002 has considerably demonstrate our concerted attempt to provide inclusive health services to all citizens. As Thailand has already become an aged society and is moving towards a super-aged society, we have strengthened our policy on fostering active and healthy ageing and intergenerational solidarity, allowing older persons to continue to meaningfully contribute to society.

In this regard, Thailand stands ready to work with all ESCAP Member States, Associated Member States as well as CSO and the relevant organizations and stakeholders to ensure that we will not lose our path towards the sustainable future amidst the global crises.
Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While challenges are mounting, I’m confident that our region has the ingenuity, enthusiasm, and spirit to delivering a better life and a more sustainable future. Need for effective cooperation among ourselves now has never been greater. I, thus, urge all of us to pull together in full cooperation.

Lastly, I wish you all success in your endeavor and have a pleasant stay in Thailand. I hope that in the next few days you would be able to make time to see yourself the true vibrant city of Bangkok.

Thank you. ขอบคุณครับ.

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