Mr/Madam President
Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen. Greetings and Talofa lava.

- Samoa is pleased to be represented at this important Conference and its preparatory process, which coincide with other important events and developments. These include among others; the 75-year anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human rights; the 60-year commemoration of the first Asian Population Conference, held in December 1963 in New Delhi, India, and the half-way mark to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

- The Conference will also provide an opportunity to review the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in the region. The trending focus will be on intersecting population and development considerations as they relate to sustainable development, both now and in the future.

- Population and development considerations are of great importance to our region, which is home to 60 per cent of the world’s population; and what happens here matters at the global level. We are undergoing a momentous transition from high to low fertility and mortality levels and to increased longevity and migration levels, resulting in older, more urban populations.

- The region is at a critical juncture. In recent decades, countries have made considerable progress in overall socioeconomic development in terms of health, poverty eradication, sanitation, nutrition and education, to name a few.
We now face both new and residual challenges and opportunities, such as a shrinking labour force, population ageing, and increased internal and international migration. We still grapple with persistent socioeconomic inequalities – including gender inequality and disrespect for human rights. Inequalities and vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by climate change, disasters, conflicts, the COVID-19 pandemic and digital transformation.

Samoa like many countries have placed focus and support on placing people at the centre of sustainable development to promote social protection, social harmony and social cohesion as reflected in our national and regional development strategies and its Population Action Plan;

Samoa re-affirms commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the 2013 Asian Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development

We recognize the importance of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in Universal health Coverage, integrated in national health plans and public budgets

Samoa continues its efforts to strengthen youth access to SRH services in view of our Adolescent Birth Rate stagnating in the last 15 years. As well, Samoa has pledged commitment to youth inclusion and participation in planning their health and wellbeing. There is continuing political engagement and endorsement at the ministerial level on Family Life Education curricula for youths in both in-school and out-of-school settings.

We understand gender inequality limits social progress, hinders social cohesion and is a barrier to our economic growth. Aspirations towards a prosperous economy will never be realized without equal opportunities to all members of our society especially the most vulnerable – including women, children and people with disabilities.

Gender based violence is a persistent problem with 52% of women in Samoa experiencing physical violence by an intimate partner in their
lifetime. Through the Spotlight Initiative, gender based violence against women and girls is being addressed through multi sectoral partnership efforts principally led with government support through various ministries including health sector responses.

- Our government has allocated funds towards addressing domestic violence for civil society organisations working in this space, in recognition of domestic violence as a social problem. To this end, Samoa’s efforts to address GBV and harmonious communities are underpinned by the engagement of men and boys and community gate keepers as agents of change in promoting gender equality and preventing gender based violence.

- As a small island developing state with high vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change and natural disasters, Samoa believes in investing in community resilience building for both pre and post disaster scenarios through capacity building and early warning systems.

- In response to the existential threat of climate change, Samoa wishes to solicit investments and accelerated action to progress the work on the Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index

- Samoa reiterates the essence of the collection, availability and use of high-quality disaggregated data on the impact of disasters, on vulnerable populations affected by natural disasters, in order to effectively protect their rights, and design tailored disaster preparedness and management response;

- Post COVID social impacts assessments highlighted the situation of people living with disabilities and has resulted in the design and implementation of social protection measures including the provision of requisite services for people with disabilities and payment of monthly disability benefits.

- Overall Samoa is committed to three Zeros namely **zero** unmet need for Family Planning, **zero** Sexual Gender Based Violence; and **zero** preventable maternal deaths. We thank all our development partners for the ongoing cooperation to ensure we deliver on these commitments.
• Thank you for your attention.

End............................................