I. Background

Population and development

The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) emphasised that people are at the centre of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development requires that the 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 the national and sub-national 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.\(^1\)

Central to this topic is the full recognition of the human rights of all persons without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.\(^2\) Population dynamics are the result of individual choices and opportunities. To address and harness the opportunities of population dynamics for sustainable development, people should be empowered to exercise their individual rights. Countries should therefore seek to enlarge individual rights by adopting policies that are human rights-based and gender-responsive.

Today, population trends are characterized by an increasing divergence across countries and regions, and sometimes even within countries. Whereas less developed countries continue to experience rapid population growth, others that are more advanced in their demographic transition are experiencing rapid population ageing and sometimes even population decline. Closely related to these trends is the increasing urbanization of the population with more than 50 per cent of all people in the world now living in cities. In addition, international migration has grown in scope, complexity and impact affecting all countries and people in the world.

Recognizing the diversity of these trends at the global, regional and national levels, population dynamics matter for all three dimensions of sustainable development aimed at eradicating

\(^1\) See Principle 2 and Principle 6 of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

\(^2\) Principle 1 of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.
poverty and promoting inclusive development that leaves no one behind, while also ensuring environmental sustainability for future generations.

Asian and Pacific context
The Asia-Pacific region is home to 60 per cent of the world’s population, and its largest populations of young people and older persons. It is in the midst of an historic transition from youthful, rural populations to older and more urbanised populations.

- The total fertility rate in the region now stands at replacement level of an average of 2.1 children per woman; however, this masks major variations, where some countries have total fertility rates as low as 1.2 children per woman, while for other countries the rate is as high as 4.5 children per woman.
- Meanwhile, although the region contains the most aged countries in the world, with some countries having as much as a third of their population over the age of 60, other countries are still youthful.
- International migration affects many countries of the region as countries of origin, destination and/or transit. In 2017, there were over 62 million international migrants in the region and over 101 million migrants from the region were living abroad.
- While 2018 is estimated to be the year in which the majority of the population of the region is found in urban areas, in a number of countries the majority of the population remains in rural areas and the number of rural residents across the region remains high.

These region-specific population dynamics represent the outcomes of different development trends. Although there is a general convergence towards lower fertility rates and greater urbanisation of populations across the region, the pace of change varies widely, representing the difficulties many people – particularly women and girls - face in fully enjoying their human rights, and notably their reproductive rights. Access to sexual and reproductive health services remains limited for many, especially for those belonging to marginalised groups, and full recognition of the needs for and rights to these services is not universal.

Identifying and addressing the inequalities in enjoyment of the highest possible standards of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, in terms both of gender and other status such as age, marital status, poverty, level of disability, indigenous, migrant or minority status are therefore critical in ensuring that the people of the Asia-Pacific region are able to fully benefit from the potential opportunities offered by the demographic transition underway.

Furthermore, the demographic transitions underway in the Asia-Pacific region take place in a context of climate change, natural disasters and other trends such as ongoing conflict whose impacts will be unevenly distributed among population groups, and which are likely in turn to have an impact on population trends. Understanding the nature of these impacts, and how to ensure that the resilience of vulnerable groups is built, will be of key importance in ensuring effective adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction activities.

Finally, capturing progress in these areas without creating excessive reporting burdens is important in ensuring that States and other stakeholders are able to identify successes and gaps in policy formulation, implementation and delivery, to ensure that population policies serve the rights of all.

The International Conference on Population and Development
In 1994, member States of the United Nations came together for the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo to recognise that “human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development.” The Programme of Action adopted during the Conference undertook a people-centred and rights-based approach. The underlying principles of the Programme of Action aimed to: advance the aims of ensuring the equality and rights of all people, including the right to development and reproductive rights; eradicate poverty; increase the accessibility, availability, acceptability and

3 Reproductive rights are defined as “the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes their right to make decisions
affordability of health-care services and facilities to all people; achieve universal access to quality education; ensure gender equality and the highest possible standards of sexual and reproductive health; ensure sustainable patterns of consumption and production; harness the opportunities of migration and urbanization for development; protect the environment; and promote international cooperation, technology, research and development to ensure effective progress.

The Programme of Action set out a framework for understanding the interrelationships between these elements, objectives, and recommended actions. It highlighted groups of particular concern, such as women, youth, migrants, older persons, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples as in need of particular support to achieve its goals. The Programme of Action set out a range of means of implementation, addressing technological means of implementation, financing and international cooperation.

The Programme of Action has been regularly reviewed since its adoption in 1994. Member States have consistently chosen to reaffirm the Programme of Action and the Key Actions for Further Implementation. Member States have further indicated that “the full implementation of the Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation as well as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is integrally linked to global efforts to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, promote, protect and respect human rights, and achieve sustainable development and that population dynamics are all important for development, including for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.4

**Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference**

Since the adoption of the 1994 Programme of Action, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has supported member States in the review and follow-up of the Programme of Action in partnership with UNFPA.

In the latest regional twenty-year review in 2013, ESCAP Member States adopted the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development as the outcome of the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference. It outlined areas of progress with regards to implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and highlighted a set of policy directions and priority actions to ensure the effective implementation of the Programme of Action in the region beyond 2014 and before the seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference scheduled for 2023, and in particular in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This outcome was recognised as providing “region-specific guidance on population and development beyond 2014.”5

The Declaration also requested that ESCAP, in collaboration with UNFPA “conduct a regional intergovernmental review meeting of 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 present Declaration in 2018, and to submit the outcome of the regional meeting the Commission at its seventy-fifth session.”

ESCAP, in collaboration with UNFPA will therefore organise the mid-term review of the sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference from 26-28 November 2018 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand.

II. Date and venue
The mid-term review of the sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference will be held from 26-28 November 2018 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand.

III. Participation
Participants will be drawn from Governments in the ESCAP region at the highest political level possible, think tanks, academic institutions, civil society, UN entities, sustainable development practitioners, and independent experts.

IV. Objectives of the mid-term review
The objectives of the mid-term review are:

a) To review progress in 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, and the recommendations of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration and identify gaps

b) To identify success indicators, lessons learned, priority actions and emerging trends as they relate to the further implementation of these documents in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

c) Prepare a regional input to the global review and evaluation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development which will take place at the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development in New York in 2019, which will have the theme “Review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

V. Expected outcome document
The outcome document of the mid-term review will be a Chair’s summary reflecting the deliberations of the meeting; summarizing progress, gaps and lessons learned; identifying emerging trends and priority areas as they relate to the ICPD Programme of Action and the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and suggesting indicators to guide further review of the ICPD Programme of Action and the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration.

VII. Structure and format of the Mid-term review
The Mid-Point Review will follow the rules of procedures of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. It will cover all areas of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development with a view to developing linkages to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which are (a) Population dynamics and inequality; (b) Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; and (c) Population dynamics, vulnerable groups and resilience to climate change and disasters. Member States will be invited to make national presentations outlining progress, challenges, lessons learned and emerging issues. Wherever possible these statements can draw on national reports prepared in the context of the preparations for the Mid-Term Review. Time permitting, civil society representatives will also have an opportunity to make a consolidated statement. Keynote presentations and panel discussions, followed by interventions from Member States will provide an opportunity for an interactive debate.