Chair,

Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

• I thank the Chair and our UNFPA colleagues for convening this important meeting.

• The 2013 Declaration was a critical milestone in our region’s collective political commitment to drive the implementation of the ICPD Program of Action
  
  o Fundamental to this Declaration was the reaffirmation of a rights based approach to development that includes everyone.

• The 2013 Declaration contained some of the most progressive and inclusive language of any regional conference or indeed, of any international forum since that time,
  
  o for example, it emphasised the importance of critical issues such as access to comprehensive sexuality education
  
  o It remains Australia’s firm position that if we want to save lives and enable people to be healthy, we must empower them through the provision of accurate information needed to make good decisions about their own bodies.
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• The Declaration is far reaching in its scope – but at its heart it confirms that universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health is essential to all sustainable development.

• Enormous progress has been made in the delivery of quality sexual and reproductive health services.

• We should celebrate the impact this has had, for example, on reduced infant and maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates.
  
  o But more must be done. 140 million women in the Asia Pacific region still have an unmet need for family planning. This is too high.

• Australia remains committed to addressing population and development challenges domestically and around the world. Since 2013, we have delivered on the Declaration’s mandate.

• Nationally, we have:
  
  o Maintained a strong record of providing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, information and services for all; and
  
  o Implemented programs for the elimination of cervical cancer primarily through
    
    ▪ the introduction of routine immunisation for the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) for boys and girls age 12-24, and
Australian National Statement

- cervical cancer screening, with the screening program being renewed from 1 December 2017 to offer HPV screening.

- Accelerated action to address cervical cancer will also contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; in particular, the reduction of premature mortality due to non-communicable diseases, achieving universal health coverage, gender equality and empowering women and girls.

- Internationally we have commenced major new partnerships to expand access to sexual and reproductive health and services in developing countries, particularly in the Pacific region and humanitarian contexts.

- Australia has also redoubled its commitment to achieving gender equality and securing women’s economic empowerment, both domestically and internationally. This is reflected, for example, in our
  - commitment to pursue these outcomes through the Human Rights Council, including maintaining strong advocacy to eliminate female genital mutilation;
  - a requirement that 80 percent of our $4 billion global aid investments specifically address gender issues;
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- strong partnerships with key global institutions to protect and promote sexual and reproductive health normative language and expand services that are free from discrimination.

- Last week Australia’s Minister for Women made the first annual Women’s Economic Security Statement [20 November].
  - This included an announcement of $109 million in funding over four years to promote greater choice for women by:
    - Boosting their skills and employability;
    - Encouraging their return to work;
    - Helping them to establish their own businesses; and
    - Improving their economic recovery following critical life events, such as family and domestic violence and separation.

- Australia is taking action to address all forms of violence against women across all levels of government. The Australian Government has invested well over $300 million since 2015 to keep women safe.

- This meeting takes place not long before the 25th anniversary of ICPD.
  - This anniversary is taking place in a challenging global environment for sexual and reproductive health.
Australian National Statement

• 25 years ago, we achieved a landmark agreement that continues to play a pivotal role. In 2013 we, the ESCAP countries, advanced that cause through a comprehensive Declaration that was welcomed globally.
  o In the future, we can, and must take it further.

• On behalf of the Australian Government, I urge Members to commit to the full implementation of the Declaration, and to fully support and implement the ICPD and its related goals as a critical step in:
  o protecting fundamental human rights, and
  o supporting our shared vision of a better future as envisaged under the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you.