Statement by the Head of DPRK Delegation at Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development

Bangkok, 26-28 November 2018

Dear Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, I would first like to congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of this session. I am convinced that this meeting will be fruitful under your seasoned chairmanship.

I would also like to appreciate ESCAP Secretariat and UNFPA for making efforts for the successful arrangement of the meeting.

I hope this meeting will be an important milestone for member states to review the progress towards the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration adopted in line with the 1994 Programme of Action (PoA) of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and SDGs, discuss on ways and approaches to cope with challenges and to promote regional cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

Five years passed since the adoption of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development.

The DPRK Government, guided by the Juche idea which says man is master of everything and decides everything, set up a goal to further improve the well-being of the people and strived to ensure that the people fulfill their role as independent and creative human beings in order to achieve quality development of population. These efforts led to making substantial achievements in the implementation of ICPD PoA and SDGs.

The DPRK policy and laws stipulate that the state takes full responsibility of taking care of its people’s life and health. Six per cent of the state budget is spent for public health. “Five-year Strategic Plan for Health Sector Development, DPRK” 2016-2020 is implemented to achieve the goals set by the National Five-year Strategy for Economic Development, fully demonstrating the vitality of the universal free medical care system.

During the period of 2011-2017, maternal mortality ratio decreased from 76 to 53.2, infant mortality rate from 18.5 to 12.3, U5 child mortality rate from 25.7 to 17.2 and unmet need for family planning from 14.5\(^1\) to 6.6. During the same period, skilled

\(^1\) National Reproductive Health Survey, Central Bureau of Statistics & Population Center, DPRK, 2010
birth attendance rate increased from 97.3 percent to 99.5 percent and life expectancy from 69.4 to 73.3 years.

Furthermore, immunization coverage is being maintained at a level above 98 percent, strategy of integrated management of child illness and essential obstetric care service has been expanded while health infrastructure has been strengthened and blood safety improved.

To comply with the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, the DPRK Government has ensured full and equal provision of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, information and education to all men and women of 16 years and older through enforcement of such legislations as Socialist Constitution, Public Health Law, Family Law, and the Law on Ensuring the Rights of Women. The implementation of the DPRK Reproductive Health Strategy 2011-2016 contributed to achieving great improvement of reproductive health and child health indicators towards achieving SDGs.

The 3rd Plenary Meeting of the 7th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea set forth tasks to build a Country of Education and a Country of Talents. To this end, we endeavor to achieve SDG 4.4 (By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship) through modernization of education facilities and improvement of quality of education. By doing so, the literacy rate of population 10 years and older reached 99.97 percent, as shown by the Socio-economic, Demographic and Health Survey (SDHS) 2014.

The DPRK executes a policy of ending all forms of discrimination against women and provides legal guarantee for equal rights and freedom. We presented to UN the implementation report of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2016, which was reviewed in November 2017. Relevant government agencies are now having consultations on recommendations.

Under the policy of giving priority to youth, all children of school age are receiving universal 12-year free and compulsory education and free medical care without discrimination, growing up into pillars of the country.

(DPRK takes positive measures to ensure that young people, on an equitable and universal basis, enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health by providing them with access to sustainable health and social services without any discrimination and legal sanctions as recommended in APMD.)
The free compulsory education is provided for all adolescents and young people in the country. The social atmosphere is conducive to the protection of young people and the Foundation Day of Children’s Union and Youth Day are celebrated. Educational facilities and public organizations at all levels have a youth league and a women’s union which strengthen moral education. In addition, violence against or abuse of children, adolescents and young people is illegal, and considered a crime.

Legal guarantee for the social protection of the elderly is ensured by adoption of the DPRK Law on the Care of the Aged in 2007. The Central Committee of the Korean Federation for the Care of the Aged (KFCA) was formed as a standing mechanism. For the implementation of the Strategic plan 2015-2018, diverse activities are conducted for improved mental and physical health and happier life of the elderly through providing social insurance, medical care service, assistance to elderly homes and elderly people without primary caregivers.

(The Asian and Pacific Declaration on Population and Development highlights the need to “Establish or strengthen national coordinating bodies or mechanisms on ageing, as appropriate, to promote and protect the rights of older persons”.

In 2007, DPRK promulgated “The Law of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea on the Care for the Elderly” to ensure social protection of the elderly covering social insurance, medical care and old-age home support and total support for the elderly without caregivers. The Korean Federation for Care of the Aged (KFCA) organizes and implements activities for the care of the elderly on a nationwide scale, coordinating with the relevant ministries, central organs and the committees for the care of the aged at every level.

The Central Committee of KFCA is focusing its efforts to implement the Strategic Plan 2015-2018 and is planning to develop new strategic plan 2019-2025 on the basis of the assessment of the current strategy implementation, especially to achieve the goals of A Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020-2030 proposed by WHO that seeks to provide mental, social and physical wellbeing in close cooperation with the Ministry of Public Health and other institutions of care for the elderly.

According to the national policy and strategy of urban and rural development, medium and small-size cities are built and local industries with stabilized production are established, reducing the gap between urban and rural and maintaining economic balance between industry and agriculture. Urban population is sustained at 61 percent since 1995, ensuring balanced and equal distribution of the population.

For the last five years, the DPRK built modern tree nurseries in all provinces including Pyongyang according to the plan to reforest all mountains across the country. “Months of Land and Environment Protection” are observed every May and November and tens
of millions of seedlings are planted in mountains, engaging the whole population and community in the campaign of land and environment protection.

Institutional mechanism on DRR was put in place with the establishment of the State Committee for Emergency and Disaster Management (SCEDM) at the central level, Emergency and Disaster Management Department within Provincial and County People’s Committees in 2015. We are making progress in enhancing DRR capacity in close collaboration with international community.

Considering the important role played by statistics, the DPRK, under the unified national statistical system, is collecting the data for all areas of society, economy and culture on a regular basis, contributing to policy formulation and improvement of people’s welfare. On the other hand, we undertook a series of studies and surveys in close collaboration with UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO. These surveys include Household listing 2013, Socio-economic, Demographic and Health Survey (SDHS) 2014, Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Needs Assessment 2014, Needs Assessment of Essential Medical Commodities 2014, Assessment of Implementation of Reproductive Health Strategy 2011-2016, National Adult Tobacco Survey 2016, and MICS 2017. The DPRK successfully concluded nationwide pilot survey for the upcoming Census in 2017 and is now preparing for the third Census.

\text{(DPRK has paid great attention to strengthen national statistical systems to produce reliable, disaggregated and internationally comparable statistics on population, social and economic development in a timely manner to help monitor subnational, national, regional and international development)}

On behalf of the DPRK delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to UNFPA and other international organizations for rendering sincere support to our efforts to achieve the goals on population and development.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the progress that has been made, there still remain many difficulties and challenges on our way towards achieving SDGs and ICPD PoA targets.

Food insecurity and limited resilience driven by recurrent natural disasters including floods and drought continue to impact nutrition and stability of children and the population as well as economic development and environment protection. Lack of medical equipment and drugs hinder our efforts to achieve the targets of reproductive health and other key health indicators.

On the other hand, escalated inhumane sanctions and pressure of hostile forces upon the DPRK are delaying or blocking the procurement and delivery of humanitarian aid supplies of UN agencies in the DPRK in the areas of health, water and sanitation,
energy and environment, thus making it difficult to provide assistance as planned. As such, the overall operation of UN agencies is impacted, which in turn entails grave consequences in implementing SDGs and ICPD PoA.

We are of the view that the humanitarian assistance of UN agencies in the DPRK should not be impacted by any form of sanctions and all unfair and discriminative measures should no longer be tolerated in the fields of economy, finance and trade. Bilateral, regional and international cooperation forms the main trend today and therefore, all efforts should be directed towards achieving 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and implementing the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration.

The Government and the people of the DPRK are committed to the implementation of the policy to concentrate all efforts on economic development and improvement of people’s livelihood. By relying on self-reliance and science and technology, we will overcome any challenge or difficulty that may come across and fully comply with our international obligations in implementing ICPD PoA and achieving SDGs.

Thank you for your attention.