Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development
26-28 November 2018
Bangkok, Thailand

Mr. / Mme. Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I begin by extending my sincere thanks to the ESCAP and UNFPA for collaboratively organizing the Midterm Review Conference, and to the Government of Thailand for its generous hosting.

The ICPD is a milestone in enhancing the aptitude of the international community for integrating a people-centered approach into sustainable development.

Of high importance is the fact that the ICPD recognizes the sovereign right of each country to implement its recommendations consistent with national values and priorities.

The Islamic Republic of Iran remains steadfast in its commitments to the development framework established by the ICPD. Spurred by its national priorities and policies, Iran in collaboration with a wide range of national partners and resident UN agencies has established an inclusive and resilient development agenda to secure advances in various areas of concern, including employment, health, education, population growth, aging, urbanization, family protection, empowerment of women and girls, and protection of persons with vulnerability.

As a result of sharp declining fertility over the last three decades, the working-age population of Iran has increased to 71 percent, offering the country a time-limited “demographic window of opportunity” and positioning it to harness its first and second demographic dividend. While life expectancy at birth reached 74 years old in 2016, the number and proportion of older persons is expected to continue increasing from 7.4 million to nearly 30 million in 2050. Thus, the Government explores to
develop effective strategies to properly place these issues in national policies and plans.

Over the past few decades, Iran has made considerable progress on health-related indicators such as reduction of maternal mortality (20 per 1000), vaccination coverage, and births attended by skilled health personnel. The Government has recently redoubled, with remarkable success, its efforts to provide Iranians with universal health coverage.

Iran has also made major achievements in education at all levels, including women’s education. In order to empower women in various areas, numerous policy measures and frameworks have been devised.

Yet, a number of challenges persist on the way to achieving population development goals, especially in areas relating to rapid ageing, environmental and disaster risks and unemployment, which need to be appropriately responded through effective remedial measures.

Mr. / Mme Chair,

The widespread realization of universal development goals requires adherence to the agreed language of the ICPD, from which the Ministerial Declaration partly sidetracked. It is our stern belief that the terms and the spirit of the agreed language of the ICPD should have been the basis for preparing the Secretariat Report. In the view of my delegation, the term “sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights” is the only term accepted in referring to the concept in question, and the references otherwise as appearing in parts of the Report should be disregarded.

It is unfortunate that flagrant disregard of some for multilateralism and international cooperation, and their growing quest for coercive unilateralism, have tempted them to exert extreme pressure against Iranians on merely selfish political grounds, seriously endangering the life of ordinary people and sabotaging years of achievements in Iran’s population
development efforts. Illegitimate sanctions, contrary to the UN principles, disrupt normal channels of international cooperation, and hinder Iran’s food security, healthcare services and pharmaceutical supplies access. Unilateral sanctions not only expose innocent civilians to collective economic punishment, openly force the banning of business and trade with companies and corporations from third party countries. The recent harmful and unjust US sanctions against Iran aim to make it difficult for the Government to obtain foodstuffs and medical supplies for its people.

Let's keep the world free from becoming a battleground for egoists’ financial war to the detriment of sustainable development.

Notwithstanding all these challenges, Iran continues to cooperating with all countries for fostering sustainable development in the region.

I thank you.