Your Excellency,……………

Good morning, delegates, ladies and gentlemen

At the outset, on behalf of the Government of Lao PDR, I would like to express our appreciation for organizing and hosting Asian and Pacific Population Conference today here in Bangkok. This is important and timely forum to share lessons learnt and discussion various important issues taking into the rise of population across the global, particularly in Asia and the Pacific.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Lao PDR adopted the 20-year forward-looking Programme of Action at the ICPD held in Cairo in 1994. Since then, Lao PDR has made progress in many areas which I would like to highlight, among others, for instance:

- Our country has made tremendous progress in reducing poverty. For 1992 to 2015, the Lao national poverty rate has declined from 46 percent to 23 percent, achieving MDG target ahead of time and currently this year, the national poverty rate is at 18% in 2018.

- Household welfare has improved in terms of ownership of assets, condition of housing, and access to services and markers. This is echoed in the improved
percentage of the use of basic drinking water services, hand-washing facility and basic sanitation facilities (78.1 percent, 54.1 percent and 71 percent respectively in 2017)

- Private sector forms a large part of the employment in Lao PDR. Therefore, the recent adoption of Strategic Private Sector Development Plan (2018 – 2020) and SME Development Strategy (2016 – 2020) by the Government help to shape the direction of private sector, which directly has an impact on poverty eradication and creating job opportunities.

- There has been an overall reduction of the early childhood mortality rate. LSIS (2017) shows that under five mortality rate (U5MR) stands at 46 deaths per 1000 live births as compared to 79 in 2012;

- Over the past two decades, Maternal Mortality Ration has declined from 1,100 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to around 220 in 2013 and 206 in 2015 according to the 4th Lao Population and Housing Census. Major hospitals can provide caesarean services and basic emergency obstetric, and newborn care services are available in every district.

- In term of the sexual and reproductive health services in Lao PDR have been improving. About 64 percent of births are assisted by trained health personnel and 64.5 percent of deliveries take place in health facilities in 2017, which show improvement from 54 percent in 2012 survey. According to LSIS (2017), 71.7 percent of women currently married or in union who have their need for family planning is satisfied with the modern contraceptive method.

After the 20-year Program of Action of International Conference of Population and Development (ICPD), the Government of Lao PDR has reaffirmed its commitment towards the ICPD through further adoption of the 10-year program (2014 – 2023) of
Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development (Ministerial Declaration or APMD) in 2013 in Bangkok during the 6th Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC). Since APMD 2014, Lao PDR has made an exponential progress on ICDP, especially for the last two years (2016–2018), as seen in the new policies and guidelines being adopted. The prominent progress of ICPD through the adoption and localization of APMD includes, for instance:

- Tremendous reduction in poverty as highlighted earlier;
- The increased number of effective transition rate from primary school to secondary school;
- The improvement in the reproductive health and rights, the guidelines to support the adolescents and young people;
- The increased number of females holding key positions in the public and private sectors and many more. In addition, many of the priority actions in APMD supporting the implementation of ICPD have been further integrated into the population related policies such as:
  - Noi Framework 2030 (the Adolescent Girls Framework) has been integrated to the 8th five years National Social Economic Development (2016-2020)
    For example, NSEDP 8th 2016-2020, Outcome2, output 4 is the Universal Access to Quality Health Care Services has identified the develop policies on health information and develop guideline on information standard and reproductive health services, sanitation and clean water in urban and rural areas which has been already integrated SDG. Especially, SDG goal 3 to ensure healthy lives, promote well-being.
  - The SDGs that Lao PDR has adopted in 2016
  - Draft National Population and Development Policy (2019 – 2030). This will launch sometime this year or early next year
  - The Health Sector Reform Framework to 2025
- The Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy and Action (RMNCHS) 2016 – 2025
- Revision of Reproductive Health Policy and
- National Youth Policy is in the process of development

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Detailed achievements and progresses are well documented in the Mid-Term Review of our 8th National Social Economic Development (2016-2020) which is currently being presented to the National Assembly for final review. Once done, we expect to share this review report with all partners during the upcoming Round Table Meeting which will be organized on 4th and 5th December 2018.

On the process of materializing the priority actions of APMD, the Lao Government is committed and put great efforts to ensure the effective implementation of ICPD plan of actions.

In this regard, for the coming years, our key focuses, among other, will be on

- Implementing the ICPD Plan of action on the investment in order to reap the potential benefits of demographic dividend;
- Strengthening national and sub-national level resource allocations to contribute in the creation of an enabling environment for young people, women and men and those living in remote areas to access quality sexual and reproductive health, and family planning services;
- Identifying and supporting programmes and policies that contribute to gender equity and women’s empowerment; implementing efficient strategies to face climate change;
- Reinforcing human capital development as a core strategy for LDC graduation and poverty reduction for national development and providing comprehensive information on safe migration for young people to reducing unsafe and illegal
migration as well as provide them vocational training skills and job development to the young people both in rural and urban areas of Laos.

Before, I end my remarks, I would like to reiterate that if we are to attain the objective of a sustainable development as highlighted in the priority actions of APMD, then it will be necessary for all of us to think carefully how we could work together under common framework to ensure that we use our resources in an effective and also efficient manner.

In Lao PDR, we have Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation identifying 8 principles to guide how we work together to yield concrete results and impacts. I strongly believe that business as usual needs to be changed and we need to be more about results with clearer indicators and targets. In particular, we will need to find innovative ways to ensure that what we are doing are actually making a difference to life of people on the ground. At the end of day, this is all development cooperation is about.

I will end here and wish wish you all a fruitful and successful discussion on the future of ICPD. Once again, I would like to thank you for all support and contribution to Lao PDR in the implementation of the national and global agendas, and sincerely thank you UNFPA, ESCAP and other agencies and governments for always being trusted development partners in this journey.

Thank you.