Madam Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, a warm iakwe from the Republic of the Marshall Islands. I would like to share a brief update on the progress and the ongoing challenges related to the implementation of the 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration and the Programme of Action for the International Conference on Population Development.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands understands that the obligations and implications of executing the 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration and the Programme of Action for the ICPD cannot be achieved overnight but through a sustainable long-term effort.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands joins our Pacific neighbors and allies, in reiterating its appreciation for this review process which allows us to systematically evaluate timely indicators towards the ICPD.

Like many other small island developing states, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, recognizes the importance of improving the quality of data collection, analysis, dissemination and utilization, particularly data related to women, girls and young persons.
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Strengthening healthcare systems is an ongoing priority to ensure quality of health care services, including sexual and reproductive health care, are effectively and efficiently delivered, particularly to the most vulnerable groups.

Significant improvements have been achieved in reducing infant and maternal deaths, increasing access to sexual and reproductive services and addressing HIV and persons living with HIV and AIDS.

Non-communicable diseases remain the leading cause of hospital admissions and premature deaths. In 2017, the Ministry of Health and Human Services conducted a National NCD Hybrid Survey targeting adults 18 years and above. The findings revealed 73% of the people surveyed to be overweight or obese, placing them at higher risk of becoming diabetic and negatively impacting reproductive health outcomes.

It also revealed 66% of women 21 to 65 years of age did not meet recommendation of receiving a PAP smear every three (3) years and 78% of women between the ages of 50 and 74 did not meet the recommendation of receiving a mammogram every two years.

In mitigating the NCD Crisis, the final draft of a new five-year NCD National Strategic Plan will be submitted to the Parliament for endorsement with direct provision of resources.
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Additionally, the Republic of the Marshall Islands was able to conduct its first Integrated Child Health and Nutrition Survey in 2017. 35% of the children under the age of 5 were classified as stunted. This alarming indicator has prompted immediate action from all levels of the Government in the development of a National Multi-Sectoral Early Childhood Development Project to be implemented as early as 2019.

Madam Chair, much progress has been achieved, yet women continue to struggle. The Republic of the Marshall Islands continues to build gender responsive policies and programs towards economic empowerment, ending violence against women and ensuring effective education and sexual reproductive health services.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is working ambitiously to improve the livelihood of its people by securing a safe and prosperous future. In this respect, young persons should have easy access to education, including family life education, which will contribute to the reduction of adolescent pregnancies and enable full participation in the workforce.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands fully supports the collaborative efforts in creating a better tomorrow. Doing nothing is never an option. And so, we call for each country regardless of size to act in furthering the implementation of the ICPD and the 2013 Ministerial Declaration.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for your time and attention.