Tēnā koutou katoa,

I greet you with a traditional welcome in Te Reo Māori, one of New Zealand’s three official languages.

Mr Chair,

I am grateful to be here with you and your colleagues from around the world to present New Zealand’s National Statement at the Midterm Review of the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference.

I am pleased to reaffirm New Zealand’s commitment to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Ministerial Declaration of the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Vienna Declaration and Programme for Action and subsequent resolutions relating to gender equality, women’s empowerment and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

New Zealand is proud to be a strong advocate for the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of its review conferences. We know that gender equality and women’s empowerment are necessary for sustainable development. Realising these regional and international commitments is imperative for achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The evidence shows that universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights is essential to realising the full range of human rights. Such access saves lives and is critical to good health and wellbeing. It must be prioritised for all individuals, without discrimination of any kind, to enable a broad range of positive outcomes, including good health, education and economic opportunities for individuals, families, communities and societies.

New Zealand is committed to providing information on and access to a full range of sexual and reproductive health services including the widest possible range of safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning and safe and legal access to abortion.

New Zealand also recognises that access to comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services is a vital component of positive development for young people including their ability to make informed decisions.

New Zealand is proud that sexuality education is a compulsory part of our national curriculum yet more work is needed. The New Zealand government this year released
recommendations to better meet the needs of our young people including the diverse needs of Māori and Pacific students, students with additional learning needs and students with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment enhance women’s decision-making capacity at all levels in all spheres of life. This includes the ability to decide freely whether and when to have children. When women have reproductive autonomy they are better able to continue their education, earn an income and participate in political life.

When women experience violence and harassment, it impacts their health, safety and autonomy. Gender-based violence remains a challenge in New Zealand. We welcomed the engagement by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on this issue at New Zealand’s Eight Periodic Review in July 2018.

There are a number of initiatives underway focused on ensuring the lives of women and girls are free of violence. For example, the New Zealand government has recently announced the establishment of a new unit, informed by an independent Māori advisory group and other stakeholders, to ensure a whole-of-government response to family and sexual violence. We recognise that violence needs to be addressed in all areas of society, from home to the workplace and this year New Zealand passed a bill for employers to provide additional leave to victims of domestic violence.

Mr Chair, to conclude, we thank you, ESCAP and the Commission for bringing us together to reflect on our work to date and the work still to come. New Zealand continues to recognise the critical importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights as part of sustainable development for all.

No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tatou katoa

Thank you.