Statement of the Dr. Juan Antonio Perez III, Executive Director of the Commission on Population of the Philippines during the Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development
In Bangkok, Thailand, 26-28 November 2018

(For Agenda Item No. 2)

Mister/Madame Chairperson,

The Philippine delegation extends its warmest congratulations to you and the members of your bureau for your well-deserved election. We commit our commitment to actively participate and contribute to the successful discussion of our agenda in this historic Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration. We are indeed honored to be with other member States in the region in reviewing our collective and country-specific milestones and remaining challenges in implementing the Programme of Action of the Conference on Population and Development in Asia and the Pacific region.

Mister/Madame Chairperson,

The Philippine Government has long recognized the intimate interrelationships of population and sustainable development and has translated this into concrete policies and programs with the aim of achieving population outcomes that are facilitative of sustainable socio-economic and human development within the principles of human rights and informed choice. Our national population policy established 50 years ago and currently implemented through the Philippine Population Management Program has been anchored on the principles of the 1994 ICPD POA.

Amidst the political and cultural factors that continuously challenged our efforts to implement the ICPD POA, we are pleased to share that the country has achieved significant milestones at the outcome and policy levels. Filipinos are continuously increasing in numbers but the rate of growth has declined to 1.76% annually since the 2015 population census. Our total fertility rate has likewise gone down to 2.7 children, closer to replacement fertility rate and the wanted and desired fertility rate of 2.4 children (2017 National Demographic and Health Survey). Adolescent fertility rate has likewise taken a downward trend. Fertility decline in the country, has been facilitated by increasing contraceptive use for modern methods. Our CPR for modern methods has increased from 38% in 2013 to 40% in 2017. Higher proportion of increase in contraceptive use was among women in the rural
areas. Moreover, access to maternal, neonatal, and child health care services has likewise improved as per our latest data.

We believe that some of these milestones on reproductive health in the country were facilitated by a more enabling policy environment specifically through the implementation of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law (Republic Act 10354). The RPRH Law is actually the country’s highest translation of our commitment to the ICPD POA specifically for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights. The law was supported by Executive Order issued by our President to achieve and sustain zero unmet need for modern family planning by 2022 and by the inclusion of the full implementation of the RPRH Law as one of the priority socio-economic agenda under President Rodrigo Duterte’s Administration. Our Department of Education has likewise issued the country’s policy on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in schools which we hope to further acceleration the reduction of adolescent pregnancies. With these policy issuances, we are optimistic that we can move more effectively towards universal access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Furthermore, the country has instituted several reforms and policy issuances in last five years to address concerns on poverty reduction, employment, health, education, gender equality and women’s empowerment, adolescents and young people, ageing, international migration, urbanization and internal migration, population and sustainable development, and data and statistics as part of the thematic concerns of the ICPD and the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development. Our current Philippine Development Plan for 2017-2022 spells out the specific policy and program interventions to address these concerns.

To ensure health financial protection among the poor, the country continues to pursue universal health coverage particularly among the poor and the marginalized. It is now automatic for senior citizens and young pregnant women to be covered by the social health insurance. The Sin Tax Reform Law was legislated to fund the Universal Health Care program of the Country. Ninety-three percent of all Filipinos are now covered by the Philippine Health Insurance.

The country’s economy remains robust at an estimated six-seven percent annual growth. However, we are exerting our efforts to ensure that our economic gains at the national level translate to better quality of lives among each Filipino. With more improved taxation system and our existing poverty reduction and social protection policies and programs such as the Conditional Cash Transfer program, agricultural development initiatives, and job creation
programs, among others, we hope to address inequality in the distribution of income at the
sub-national and household levels.

To continuously improve the quality of our human resource, the country has now
institutionalized education reforms through our K-12 policy, the provision of free tuition and
fees to tertiary students of state universities and colleges, and the intensified Quality
Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) program, among others.

As a country highly vulnerable to environmental calamities and to the impact of climate
change, the country has laid down interventions that aim to ensure resiliency of families and
communities. For this, we have instituted our national climate change policy which
established the Climate Change Commission and the people’s survival fund to ensure funding
to local government units in establishing resiliency interventions.

Mister/Madame Chairperson,

While we have these significant interventions and strategies, much remains to be desired in
terms of fully realizing the goals of the ICPD POA and as reinforced by the APMDPD in our
country and in the Asia and the Pacific Region. Towards this, we shall strengthen our resolve
to implement substantive strategies that ensures people-centered sustainable development.
One of our priority actions is the implementation of key strategies we have defined in our
Philippine Development Plan to achieve and optimize demographic dividend. The full
implementation of the RPRHI law is likewise in order. And, finally, our economic reforms are
being put in-place to ensure that all Filipino benefit from the fruits of our on-going socio-
economic development.

Mister/Madame Chairperson,

The Philippines believes that our milestones and accomplishments in the Asia and the Pacific
Region in improving the sexual and reproductive health and rights of our people in the region
was because of our commonalities rather than by our differences. 25 years ago, we have
signified our common intention to improve the sexual and reproductive health and rights of
our constituents through the ICPD POA and reinforced by our common declaration on
population and development. However, for three several years now, the failure to reach a
consensus at the global level to push further the implementation of the ICPD has become a
significant barrier in pushing for needed international partnerships and cooperation in
realizing the promise of the ICPD without leaving anyone behind. As a united region, we
invite and urge our member countries in the Asia and the Pacific to lead the way and
proactively advocate among other countries outside the region to reach a consensus in implementing the agreements of the ICPD POA. While we need to take into consideration the development of the times, we should not move away from the language that we have agreed 25 years ago. We believe that as a strong-willed region, we can show to the world that we can move forward collectively rather than retrogress in the implementation of the ICPD POA. For this, we call for the conduct of a more regular and frequent mechanism to review the implementation of the ICPD POA in the region particularly within the context of the SDGs. Lastly, we continue to call for a united Asia and the Pacific region in the full implementation of the ICPD POA in the region, and we can show that during the 51st Session of the Commission on Population and Development in New York in 2019.

Thank you very much.