Thank you Mister Chair,

More than ever, the resolve of our country to leave no one behind is strongly being pursued as a mantra for all its development initiatives. In the face of prevailing poverty, which is the root cause of inequality, our development initiatives are being pursued to achieve a healthy, happy, and prosperous life for every Filipino.

The country strongly recognizes the role of population factors in sustainable development. Indeed, the unequal income distribution across sub-national regions in the country has been harnessed by unequal patterns of population distribution. For example, out of 17 regions, three regions have one-third of the total population in the country. As such, two-thirds of our gross domestic products are shared by these three regions and the one-third of the economy by the 14 regions. Given this, rural poverty remains.

Poverty is likewise the root cause of inequality in accessing basic social services including sexual and reproductive health care. Unplanned pregnancies, teenage pregnancies, low contraceptive use, and high mortality rates have selective of those who are in living in poverty and poor socio-
economic situations. Moreover, gender inequality continue to worsen inequality in the country.

Recognizing the role of population in prevailing inequality, our government has explicitly integrated population management program as a key cross-cutting strategy of our national development as specifically spelled out in our Philippine Development Plan for 2017-2022. Specifically, our Philippine Population Management Program is being pursued to enable families to achieve their fertility goals within the demands of responsible parenthood. This is being done through the implementation of our Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law. We are likewise capacitating our institutions at all levels to integrate population dynamics including internal migration and other important population outcomes in their sectoral and local development plans to ensure that all development initiatives are responsive to people’s needs wherever they are and whatever their characteristics, cultural backgrounds, and affiliation are.

We are grateful that this thematic concern is given emphasis in this session as we likewise recognize that addressing inequality in a country cannot be done in isolation from other countries. Our regional integration and the ongoing globalization process play a crucial role in either fostering and negating inequality. As such, we call upon all countries in the region to strengthen its partnership and collaborative mechanism to address poverty, population concerns, and other factors causing inequality. We need to foster and enhance existing mechanisms such as south-south and intergovernmental collaboration for countries to learn from each other and work together. We also urge development partners to strengthen their
interventions in helping poor and developing countries to address inequalities. Thank you very much.