Agenda 3.b. Advancing Gender Equality and Universal Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights

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Thank you, Chair.

The Philippines appreciates the Report by the Secretariat on the above agenda which outlined the progress achieved so far and identified the gaps in the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development.

Universal health care coverage including universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights should continue to be a priority agenda, and we agree that priority should be given to those often left behind who are the vulnerable sector of the population.

Guided by gender equality, the policy environment in the Philippines gives Filipino couples and individuals the right to choose the timing, spacing, and number of children they want to have, or if they want to have children, at all. The principle of informed choice and voluntarism is deeply embedded in our landmark legislation, Republic Act No. 10354, popularly known as the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law.

We share the same sentiment on placing importance on comprehensive sexuality education relevant to curbing the unmet need of young people’s sexual and reproductive health, thereby, preventing and reducing unwanted pregnancies among adolescents.

Further, the Philippines wishes to inform the group that we have made considerable progress in terms of our health outcomes. However, continuously reducing maternal and infant mortality; and substantially lowering fertility in the Philippines remain key development challenges to accelerate demographic transition. Therefore, we are strengthening involvement of all stakeholders for a whole of nation action.

Also, we are shifting our focus to primary health care system strengthening to improve health outcomes through promotive-preventive measures which includes integrating comprehensive reproductive health services in primary health care packages across the life stage, incorporating reproductive health needs to our national preparedness plan for disasters, combining efforts with related health programs in the light of global burden such as HIV, and establishing the accompanying patient-centered service delivery network. All these are elements of the Philippine Formula One Plus strategic framework to achieve universal health care.

Thank you, Chair