Mr. Chairman/Madam Chair, (as appropriate)

At the outset, let me congratulate you on the election as the Chair of this Session.

Sri Lanka delegation is confident that this Mid Term Review will achieve its objectives under your able stewardship. Sri Lanka has always had confidence in the UN System for the human development hand in hand with the socio-economic development of the world in a sustainable environment.

Sri Lanka, as a Champion of Human Development in the Region, has achieved impressive progress in several areas; in extreme poverty reduction and the proportion of the population under the poverty line which has reduced to 4.1% by 2016; in addition, life expectancy, literacy rate and many other social indicators are comparable with those of developed countries.

In poverty reduction, the government of Sri Lanka launched Samurdhi Assistance Programme and Gramashakti Programmes. The Samurdhi Programme was introduced as the main welfare programme in place for the benefit of the low-income families of the country and it provides cash assistance for 14 Lakh families.

The government has launched ‘Gramashakthi’, a public private partnership programme, with the goal of poverty eradication by 2030 through the empowerment of villages.

People of Sri Lanka benefit from a very good healthcare systems and its success is largely due to the effective public delivery system, which provides both preventive and curative care, mostly cost free for all citizens and accounts for almost all preventive care and most in-patient treatment.

Sri Lanka stands out for its lower numbers of maternal deaths. The Maternal Mortality Rate in Sri Lanka is 39.3 for 100,000 live births in 2017 and the Infant Mortality Rate 8.5 deaths per 1,000 live births (2015 provisional). They are indicative of a functional health-care system, despite relatively low income levels.
The improvements of these indicators are mainly credited to the National Maternal and Child Care Program that was implemented as an essential part of the national health-care system.

The introduction of routine immunization has generally reduced the incidence of several vaccine preventable diseases. Today, the WHO has declared Sri Lanka as malaria and filariasis free and on route to achieving the elimination status for congenital syphilis and mother to child transmission of HIV.

The development of sustainable health-care improvement strategies will be a strategic government investment of the highest importance and would like to share our success stories with the global community for the betterment of humanity.

External review of the national family planning programme was done in 2017 after 60 years. Sri Lanka became a new FP2020 commitment making country in July 2018. The Family Planning Programme has been integrated into maternal and child health services since the 1960s. A national family planning strategy is being developed to improve family planning programs and to address newly emerging issues and challenges.

The Government of Sri Lanka is committed to include a budget-line for reproductive health in 2019 and to work in partnership with the education sector to address the accessibility of Comprehensive Sexuality Education programmes for adolescents and youth with necessary services as appropriate.

Amongst 187 countries, Sri Lanka ranks 97 with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.691. But it does even better on gender with a rank of 74 for its Gender Inequality Index (GII). This is a clear indication that government, private sector, civil society and all other institutions in Sri Lanka has made a significant contribution to where we are to-day.

It is with a deep sense of gratitude that we state today that over the years, women have substantially contributed to the economic development of Sri Lanka.

They are the overwhelming majority which provides hard labour in the estate sector including tea plantations and the apparel industry, which accounts for US$ 5 billion of the country’s total export earnings out of US$ 10 billion.

Remittances from Sri Lankans working abroad amount to $ 6.3 billion per annum. And out of the 1.7 million Sri Lankan remitters, 36.7% are women.
However, the women of Sri Lanka face many challenges due to unequal factors of political participation, labour force participation and access to the decision-making processes. To overcome those disparities the government has identified inclusion and mobilization of women as equal partners in all developmental processes as priority.

Many national commitments have been made by the Sri Lankan Government including the elaboration of the National Plan of Action on Sex and Gender-based violence (2017-2021), a dedicated Chapter on Women’s Rights in the Human Rights Action Plan (2017-2021), the introduction of quotas and Gender Mainstreaming committees within the public institutions, the National Framework for Women-Headed Household (2017-2019) and to increasing female political participation of women, with an amendment to local electoral law to reserve 25% of all seats to women being passed in 2016.

Aging is a challenge for the socio-economic development of Sri Lanka as it is for many of the countries of the region. The population above the age of 60 years which was 2.5 million and 12.5% of the total population in 2012 will be 16.7% by 2021. An ageing population will not only create a shortage of young talent in the national labor force, but also create large-scale exodus of experienced human capital from the national labor force reaching their traditional retirement age.

The Government of Sri Lanka understands the need to have policies that focus on addressing the needs of older people and resource allocation, planning and developing physical and social infrastructure at provincial and district levels.

Climate Change related disaster management is another key concern of the Government of Sri Lanka. The national climatic change policy was formulated in 2012 - Sri Lanka strongly believes in the need for action to mitigate effects of climatic change.

The strain on Public Financing, shrinking National Labor Force, pressure on National Healthcare System have been identified as key factors that would hinder the national development of Sri Lanka in the coming years.

In conclusion, the Sri Lanka delegation wishes to pledge its fullest support and cooperation in making this session a success and look forward to closely engage with the UN ESCAP in the advancement of its population and development programme.

Thank you.