Thank you, Mr. Chair. I’m Maria Melinda Ando and on behalf of the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) and other NGOs here, I’d like to thank ESCAP for emphasizing health as one of the key challenges regarding implementation of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development in the region.

While maternal mortality indeed remains a big issue, I’d also like to draw your attention to other equally important challenges related to health, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). For example:

- **Access to the full range of contraception** is still an issue. And while women have been having less children, they are still having more children than they want.
- **Adolescent births**, which bear increased risk of maternal deaths or morbidities, continue to be a challenge. **Early and forced marriage** is also a problem.
- **Unsafe abortion** continues to be a major factor in maternal deaths and morbidities in the region.
- **Reproductive cancers** are a major threat for women, but governments in the region are not adequately prepared to provide screening, preventive measures, treatment and care services.
- **HIV-related stigma and discrimination** are barriers to universal access to HIV prevention treatment, care and support in the region.
- **Universal access to SRH services** has been difficult to achieve even in countries where there are efforts to promote universal health coverage with: challenges in both supply and demand side and barriers including cultural factors, gender power relations, and privatization of health care.
- Contrary to leaving no one behind, **access to information, including comprehensive sexuality education, and services for marginalised groups** is a concern across all countries and the regional action plan must take efforts to ensure **disaggregation of data**.
- **Sexual and reproductive health problems** take a huge toll on lives, families, societies and economies—and public budgets—yet they are preventable, with proven, cost-effective solutions. **Investing in sexual and reproductive health and rights has high payoffs for poverty eradication, social, economic and sustainable development, and for equality and equity.**

We thus urge the Committee on Social Development to **show political commitment and provide sustained financial investments** to ensure universal access to comprehensive, affordable, quality, gender-sensitive health and nutrition information, education and services, including SRHR, at all stages and across all locations, even in times of emergencies, for all, including women, young people, people with disabilities, migrants, refugees and displaced peoples, indigenous peoples, small scale farmers, fisherfolk, people living with and affected by HIV, people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identities and gender expression, sex workers, religious and ethnic minorities, urban poor, and other groups. We also ask you to **review, amend and implement laws and policies** to address our needs and realities, and to uphold all human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights.