Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates

The Bhutanese delegation would like to thank UNESCAP for hosting and organizing this important conference. We would also like to express our appreciation to UNECAP for the undertaking the arduous task of making easy our deliberations here in Bangkok through various preparatory initiatives such as the ICPD beyond 2014 Global Survey and the Preparatory Meeting earlier this year.

Mr. Chairman,

We gather here in Bangkok to review the progress that the Asia-Pacific region made in Cairo and adopted the ICPD Programme of Action and made a commitment to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people in the world. More importantly, building on our successes and gaps in the implementation of the Programme of Action, we are here to arrive at a consensus on the way forward in integrating population and development issues into the new global development agenda when the MDGs conclude in 2015. We are pleased that the Asia Pacific region will have the opportunity to have its collective voice heard. The Royal Government of Bhutan therefore, values this opportunity and attaches high importance to this Asia-Pacific Population Conference. We would like to thank UNFPA for facilitating the participation of our delegation.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite significant progress, South-Asia still remains one of the regions with high incidence of poverty. Almost one third of South Asians continue to live under a dollar and half a day and much remains to be desired in our health, education and other social sectors. The progress that the region has made so far in reducing poverty is constantly under threat by the ripple effects of climate change and growing uncertainties in the global economy. Hence, more than ever, there is a need to intensify cooperation at the regional and international levels in addition to accelerating socio economic growth at the national levels. Hard earned gains on several fronts have been achieved by the
international community, in particular the Asia-Pacific region, built on the foundations of global commitments, on which we cannot allow any backtracking. In this context, special attention has to be drawn towards the specific needs of LLDCs, which face structural impediments to achieve sustainable economic development. In the case of Bhutan with its fragile ecosystem and mountainous terrain, the challenges are particularly acute in the delivery of social services, enhancing agricultural productivity, and in the development of a dynamic private sector.

Population dynamics is fundamental to sustainable development and therefore, Bhutan believes that it should be one of the main considerations in the current discussions on the post 2015 Development Agenda. We also note that population dynamics is interlinked to other important core issues of development including health, education, unemployment, patterns of consumption and production and the environment and that none of them can be considered in isolation.

**Mr. Chairman**

Bhutan throughout has remained committed to achieving the goals set out in the ICPD Programme of Action and the ICPD process. Breaking away from the past narrow perspective on population issues, which were largely confined to family planning and reproductive health policies, in recent times, policy-making and planning in Bhutan has been expanded to include other aspects of population and development such as population and environment, population and economy, population and gender and the poverty dimension, among others.

**Mr. Chairman**

At the international level, the Post 2015 development agenda has taken center stage in global discussions, and it is clear that the unfinished business of the MDGs, including elements such as gender equality and addressing social and economic inequity must remain priorities in any Post 2015 development agenda. We observed from our active engagement in the various parallel processes, the strong view that the Post 2015
Development Agenda must be an inclusive framework. In this context, principles of the ICPD that outline the work and mandate of the UNFPA converge with this growing consensus.

Bhutan is pleased to note that the 15 principles of the ICPD find resonance in Bhutan’s conceptualization of happiness and wellbeing, as encapsulated in our policy of Gross National Happiness. We look forward to working with our partners at ESCAP and UNFPA to ensure that these priorities find reflection in a single unified Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

Bhutan is recognized along with other Asia Pacific states as having already moved beyond the GDP growth paradigm, and for our use of Gross National Happiness as a basis for national planning. With the intent of making Bhutan’s contributions towards the global discourse on Post 2015 agenda, Bhutan has spearheaded its own efforts to articulate a New Development Paradigm (NDP), which we consider is a response to the international call for a transformative SDG framework and Post 2015 development agenda. The basic premise of the NDP is that the fundamental change that the world needs will come from redefining the very purpose of development beyond the present compulsion simply to increase material production and unsustainable patterns of consumption. The GNH approach has served Bhutan well. In the spirit of contributing constructively towards the elaboration of the Post 2015 development agenda and sharing our positive experiences and lessons learned, Bhutan intends to share our findings with the international community during the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

My delegation would like to commend the ESCAP Secretariat for the excellent report presented before us and I am convinced that this will be helpful in steering our future interventions towards achieving the MDGs by 2015 and also beyond 2015. It is our hope that our deliberations here will converge with other principle inputs to the Post 2015
development agenda and eventually culminate in a single global development agenda that truly reflects the universal aspiration of all peoples in the world. I understand that, during the course of the negotiations so far at this meeting, my delegation has offered our views on various aspects of the ongoing discussions and developments. At this point I would only like to underscore that to ensure the core ICPD principles are respected and further advanced, obligations set out in the outcome document will require substantial resources and needs to be appropriately followed by the provision of an adequate means of implementation which would ensure that small states with special needs and developing countries have the required resources to fulfill the commitments set out in the Programme of Action. We, and I am sure the other delegations join us, therefore call on the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the UNFPA and all other development partners, to support such countries and not just with technical Assistance but with resources to actually implement the activities. I am also glad to note that the recommendations of this conference recognizes the sovereign rights of each country, and the need to conform to national laws, development priorities, religious and ethical values and cultural background of our peoples.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate that our vision is one of a common future that will ensure the economic well-being, improvement in the quality of life, social justice and peace and security resulting in happiness for the people of our region. As we move forward, I believe that together, we can turn challenges into opportunities to build more balanced, inclusive and sustainable economies. On our part, Bhutan remains committed to this process, and we assure you of our continued support in realizing this common goal.

Thank you and Tashi Delek.