Statement at the Sixth Asia-Pacific Population Conference

By
H. E. Madam Li Bin
Minister
National Health and Family Planning Commission of China
19 September 2013 Bangkok, Thailand

Your Excellency Mr. Chairman,
Honourable Ministers,
Dear delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning!

First of all, on behalf of the Chinese Delegation, I would like to extend our warm congratulations on the convening of the Sixth Asia-Pacific Population Conference and our heartfelt gratitude to our hosts, UNESCAP, UNFPA and the Royal Thai Government, for your excellent preparation for the conference and your warm hospitality to all participants.

The Fifth Asia-Pacific Population Conference held in 2002 and its Bangkok Program of Action have made important contributions to improving family planning and reproductive health, reducing maternal and child mortality, alleviating
poverty and promoting sound development of population programs in the Asia-Pacific region in the past decade. We sincerely hope that this conference will push forward the population and development programme in the Asia-Pacific region to a new stage.

The world population, despite its slowdown in growth rate at present, will continue to grow in total quantity in the coming decades. On the one hand, the continuing quantitative growth of population in developing countries will intensify conflicts between population and economy, society, resources and the environment. On the other hand, many developed countries face such challenges as low fertility and population ageing. The Asia-Pacific region houses over 60% of the world population. Against the backdrop of globalization and in face with severe challenges such as climate change, uneven regional development and increased population migration, we need, more than ever, to strengthen our cooperation in the population area for joint responses thereto.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
As a developing country with 1.35 billion population, the Chinese Government has been earnestly performing its commitments to the ICPD Programme of Action and the MDGs. By adhering to the focus on holistic human-centered development, China has been taking the path of coordinating the development of population, economy, society, resources and the environment for attainment of sustainability, and
achieved remarkable progress in socio-economic development, poverty eradication, universal access to education, improvement of health services, and upgrading of women’s status, thanks to its devoted efforts in all these areas.

Through relentless efforts in the last few decades, China has effectively controlled excessive population growth, brought down the total fertility rate to below the replacement level, and thereby basically completed its modern demographic transition. By the criteria of 1 dollar per day per person, China has reduced its impoverished population from 208 million in 2002 to 62 million in 2010, becoming the earliest country to attain the MDG target of “halving the poverty population”. For the recent decade, China has attained, ahead of schedule, the MDGs related to reducing maternal mortality and under-5 mortality, with the former going down from 43.2/100,000 to 24.5/100,000 and the latter from 34.9‰ to 13.2‰. Meanwhile, the average life expectancy at birth has risen from 71.40 to 74.83 years. Such proactive explorations and successful practices of China in the population area have not only facilitated rapid social and economic development, improved health status of the public and enabled better wellbeing of the people in China, but also contributed positively to the stabilization of the world population and sustainable development of humankind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Despite its marked achievements in the areas of population and development, China is confronted by a series of problems
and challenges that it cannot afford to neglect. In a fairly long time to come, the basic Chinese situation, i.e., a large population combined with a relatively low economic status and limited natural resources, will remain fundamentally unchanged, while the conflicts between population, economy, society, resources and the environment remain acute. Furthermore, structural change of the population will intensify; the working-age population, after reaching its peak value, will start to decline; the population is ageing at a faster pace with a growingly large proportion of the oldest old; sex ratio at birth remains to be higher than normal; and domestic migration will be continuously growing in a large number.

Faced with such emerging issues and challenges, the Chinese government regards the success in the areas of population and family planning as an important strategic task, and incorporates it into the overall deployment of the nation’s “12th Five-Year Plan”. China will continue to stick to the basic state policy of family planning, gradually improve its population policy, and promote long-term balanced development of the population. During its institutional restructuring in March this year, the Chinese Government, in its restructuring process, merged the former Ministry of Health and National Population and Family Planning Commission into the National Health and Family Planning Commission, so as to optimum the resource allocation for better health and family planning services to the public in general.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
In view of the new challenges, we need to enhance concerted actions at both the national, regional and global levels, and formulate a new agenda for development to ensure sustainability. To this end, we would like to propose the followings:

First, we shall uphold the spirit and principles of the ICPD and implement integrated strategies for population and development: With attention paid to the relationship between population dynamics and sustainable development, we should incorporate population issues into the master plans for national socio-economic development so that population could develop in a coordinated way with socioeconomic development and resources and the environment.

Second, we shall address population issues in a comprehensive manner to enable long-term balanced development of population: The relationship between quantity, general quality, structure and distribution of population should be handled in a comprehensive way with special attention paid to impacts of demographic structural changes on socioeconomic development and respond proactively to population ageing. Meanwhile, efforts should be made to promote cooperation with NGOs, intensify the links between family planning and poverty reduction, women’s empowerment, healthy adolescent development, family development and social security system development, and thereby facilitate holistic human development.
Third, we shall adhere to equitable provision of public services and accelerate attainment of universal access to reproductive health and family planning services. In this regard, we shall incorporate reproductive health and family planning services into the basic public service system and more budgetary inputs into such services regarding them as indispensable components of national health and public service budgets. We call for special attention to adolescent sexual and reproductive health education and services, and efforts to enhance accessibility and convenience of reproductive health and family planning services to vulnerable groups including migrants and the population under poverty.

Fourth, we shall further promote international exchanges and cooperation for global partnerships in the areas of population and family planning. The South-South cooperation including South-North-South and triangular cooperation shall be further promoted with the aim of achieving common development and win-win situation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Attainment of the ICPD goals and MDGs are joint tasks of all governments of countries including China. The Chinese Government is much willing to work with other national governments and the international community in our concerted relentless endeavor for sustainable development and better wellbeing of all human beings.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman