



**Commission on Population and Development,  
57th session**

**29 April – 3 May 2024  
United Nations, New York**

**Statement agenda item 3 “General debate”**

**Statement by  
Ms. Srinivas Tata, Director, Social Development Division, ESCAP**

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Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

It is an honour for ESCAP to take part in the general debate of this Commission’s fifty-seventh session.

Since the landmark adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action 30 years ago, Asia and the Pacific has been translating its principles and objectives into action in the context of profound demographic change in the region.

Asia and the Pacific has experienced a significant decline in fertility and mortality resulting in a shift toward an increase in the number and share of older persons while the number of youth is at an all-time high. At the same time, Asia and the Pacific is undergoing profound economic and social change. The region has been an engine of global economic growth with digital transformation boosting economic progress. Yet poverty and inequality is on the rise in the region for the first time in decades. These challenges are further compounded by climate change, conflicts and disasters. Urgent action is required to ensure that we leave no one behind in our quest to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

It is in this context that ESCAP, in partnership with the Asia-Pacific Regional Office of UNFPA, organised the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference. The Conference was held from 15 to 17 November 2023, in Bangkok and online, under the able leadership of H.E. Mr. Varawut Silpa-archa, Minister, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Thailand. Participants from 43 members and associate members took part in the Conference, along with over 100 civil society organizations, United Nations entities and other international organizations.

The Conference assessed the progress made in implementing the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development and the ICPD Programme of Action in Asia and the Pacific. At the Conference, ESCAP Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action.

Participants recognized the significant improvements in education, healthcare and poverty alleviation. However, healthcare gaps, lack of decent work for all, high youth unemployment, lack of social protection, and barriers to gender equality and the empowerment of women remained. At the Conference, delegations called for good governance, dialogue and genuine engagement with people, including civil society organizations, and strengthened collection, dissemination and analysis of disaggregated data. They highlighted the importance of social protection over the life course and healthy and active ageing policies. They called on fostering

intergenerational relations. Strengthening gender equality would reduce poverty and contribute to more inclusive and productive societies. Delegations focused on the urgent need to focus on policies focused on delivering services to the populations left furthest behind.

The full report of the Conference, including the Chair's summary and all associated documentation, can be accessed on the ESCAP website.

Madame Chair,

ESCAP, too, reaffirms its commitment to its member States to support their efforts to accelerate the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the regional and country levels.

ESCAP places particular emphasis on supporting member States in achieving inclusive and sustainable development. Never before have so many people of different generations lived together. ESCAP is therefore promoting intergenerational relations, with a vision to harness the demographic dividend and to reframe ageing as an opportunity rather than a challenge. We advocate for ageing populations to be recognised as contributors to socio-economic growth. We work closely with governments in revising their policies and action plans on older persons. We also support countries in mainstreaming ageing, addressing demand for care in light of demographic change, particularly affecting women, and using technology to ensure that no older person is left alone.

Moreover, migration levels remain high in Asia and the Pacific and too often, migration is not safe, orderly and regular. We support collection of data and research on migration, and we work closely with members of the Regional United Nations Network on Migration for Asia and the Pacific to support member States in implementing the Global Compact for Migration in the region.

Demographic change in Asia and the Pacific is rapid and given the sheer number of people in the region, the effects of this change are felt not only at regional, but also global levels. We therefore value our close partnership with UNFPA in Asia and the Pacific, noting that our work at the regional level also informs and stimulates global and national action.

We also recognize the value of our strong and productive partnership with civil society and other non-government stakeholders, including academia.

We look forward to continuing to work with all stakeholders in supporting member States in accelerating the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in Asia and the Pacific now and in the future.

Thank you, Madame Chair.