EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report 2023



with Report on the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference

Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference
BANGKOK, 15–17 NOVEMBER 2023

UNFPA

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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific



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from

Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report 2023

Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report 2023
United Nations Publication
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Printed in Bangkok
ST/ESCAP/3112

Suggested citation: United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (2023). Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report 2023 (ST/ESCAP/3112).

Available at: https://www.unescap.org/kp/2023/asia-pacific-population-and-development-report-2023

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Acknowledgements

The publication was prepared by the Social Development Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) under the overall direction and guidance of Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP.

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The following individuals, in alphabetical order, attended the Expert Group Meeting on the Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report 2023, held on 13 and 14 June 2023, and reviewed an earlier draft of this report; many provided valuable comments:

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Analysis and data management regarding SDGs were principally undertaken by Dayyan Shayani and Xian Ji (ESCAP).

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Foreword



Asia and the Pacific – home to 60 per cent of the global population – has been at the forefront of significant demographic changes. Since the first Asian Population Conference, in New Delhi, in 1963, most countries have transitioned from high to low fertility and mortality, coupled with increased migration and more people living in urban areas.

Over the past decades, Asia and the Pacific has made much progress in terms of improvements in health, nutrition, sanitation, education and housing, as well as poverty eradication. These changes are a cause for celebration; but now, the region stands at a crossroads. Emerging demographic trends, such as population ageing, low fertility and increased migration – coupled with the challenges of socioeconomic inequalities and vulnerabilities, and the impact of climate change, disasters, conflicts, the COVID-19 pandemic and digital transformation – increase the need for countries to take urgent action.

Rather than focusing on one population and development challenge or opportunity at a time, efforts should be made to address interlinkages and consider how action (or inaction) today affects outcomes for current and future generations. As life expectancies increase, more people of different age groups are living together for longer periods, making intergenerational relations a must for an inclusive future where no one is left behind. Forward-looking policies are needed to deliver prosperity to all members of present and future generations.

Given the complexity of demographic trends and their interrelations with other socioeconomic developments, we must pursue a holistic, rights- and evidence-based approach to population dynamics and sustainable development. This also needs to be gender sensitive, while including life course and intergenerational perspectives.

The Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report 2023 was prepared in conjunction with the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC). It brings together the latest evidence on the priority actions of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development (APMD), with a particular focus on SDG indicators. It also presents good practices and lessons learned identified by member States and civil society organizations, based on responses to the voluntary national APPC survey and informed by research findings on key population and development issues. Moreover, it provides forward-looking recommendations to guide the continuing implementation of APMD and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in Asia and the Pacific. The report is intended as a resource to support countries in the region in developing inclusive and sustainable population and development policies and guiding discourse on the topic.

In this spirit, ESCAP hopes that *the Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report 2023* will contribute to wider discussion and understanding of population and development issues in Asia and the Pacific, and beyond.



Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Foreword



Out of the 8 billion global population today, almost 60 percent live in the Asian and Pacific region. For this large group of people, considerable progress has been achieved in promoting the population and development agenda in the region for many years. Life expectancy has increased due to the overall improvement in health. Increased access to education and sexual and reproductive health, especially for women and girls, has led to a reduction in maternal deaths and in adolescent pregnancy rates. Poverty has declined. In addition, women's participation in economic development has increased due to improvements in gender equality and women's empowerment.

However, progress has not been linear, equitable nor irreversible and severe disparities continue to exist. Crises caused by climate change, conflict and pandemics are exacerbating the disparities and impacting the health and well-being of the most vulnerable, including women and girls. This makes achieving gender equality and protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights more challenging. In addition, demographic changes in the region — such as population ageing, low fertility, migration, and growing urbanisation — are requiring a shift in our approach to population development.

Within this context, it is of paramount importance to design and implement population-centred development policies that start with people and securing their dignity and rights. Among other interventions, the adoption of a comprehensive life-cycle approach to policies and development plans is required, where investments are made at every stage of an individual's life - from safe birth, to adolescence, to adulthood and beyond reproductive age - and where we continue to see longevity as a success rather than a crisis.

This report brings together the latest evidence on population and development issues in Asia and the Pacific that was discussed during the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference. It not only provides the evidence base for forward-looking policymaking on how we collectively deliver a better present and future, but also includes recommendations for how to address the challenges of the region. UNFPA hopes that this report will be widely disseminated, stimulate further regional cooperation and innovative thinking, and be instrumental in accelerating progress toward the achievement of the ICPD Programme of Action.

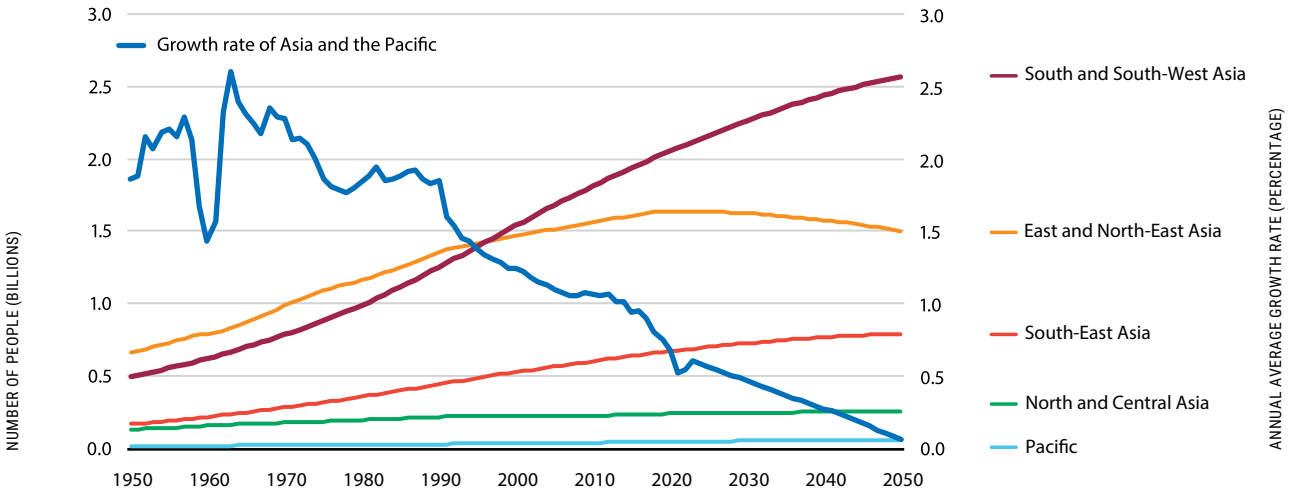


Pio Smith
Regional Director for UNFPA Asia and the Pacific

Executive summary

About 4.7 billion people, or 60 per cent of the world's population, currently reside in Asia and the Pacific. That number is projected to increase to 5.2 billion by 2050. Population dynamics in Asia and the Pacific are driving population trends at the global level. What countries in the region decide to do to advance the population and development agenda will leave its imprint on any future development agenda.

FIGURE A Population size by Asia-Pacific subregion and annual growth rate for Asia and the Pacific, 1950–2050



source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Population Prospects 2022, Online Edition.

In 1963, countries from the region convened in New Delhi to hold the first Asian Population Conference. In 1967, ESCAP member States decided, by resolution 74 (XXIII), to establish the Asian Population Conference as a statutory organ of the Commission. The Conference was mandated to be convened every ten years, synchronizing with the decennial population and related censuses, for the consideration of all aspects of population issues and of their impact on economic and social development.

Since then, the Asian and Pacific Population Conference has been held almost every ten years. In 2013, ESCAP member States adopted the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development (APMD). This promotes a people-centred, rights-based, gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory approach. It is closely aligned with the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). In 2020, at its sixth session, the ESCAP Committee on Social Development endorsed the Asia-Pacific indicator framework for voluntary monitoring of progress towards the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the commitments contained in APMD. The framework is based on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators. In preparation for the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference in 2023, a voluntary national survey was sent to all ESCAP members and associate members to help countries assess the implementation of APMD.

This report has been prepared in conjunction with the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference, in 2023. It brings together the latest evidence on the priority actions of APMD, with a particular focus on SDG indicators, good practices and lessons learned by member States and civil society organizations, based on responses to the voluntary national Asian and Pacific Population Conference survey and research findings on key population and development issues. Furthermore, it provides specific forward-looking recommendations to guide the continuing implementation of APMD and the Programme of Action in Asia and the Pacific. The report is intended as a resource and guide to support countries in the region in developing future inclusive and sustainable population and development policies.

The report is structured according to the following 11 priority actions identified in APMD:

- Poverty eradication and employment
- Health
- Sexual and reproductive health, services and rights
- Education
- Gender equality and women's empowerment
- Adolescents and young people
- Ageing
- International migration
- Urbanization and internal migration
- Population and sustainable development
- Data and statistics

Poverty eradication and employment

Despite declines in poverty across the region, disparities continue and, in many countries, have been exacerbated. In some, poverty rates have stagnated or increased. At the subnational level, differentials in poverty are often stark. This includes urban-rural dynamics and disparities, with rural poverty generally greater than urban poverty.

Productive and decent work for all, in particular for women, remains a challenge and affects poverty. In many countries, female labour force participation is low, and women are primarily concentrated in the informal sector. Moreover, women do most unpaid domestic and care work and are more susceptible than men to job loss and loss of access to government financial support. Youth unemployment is generally much higher than unemployment among those aged 25 years or older. Coverage of social protection is uneven across the region, and women and marginalized groups are often particularly affected, given a lifetime of gender inequality.

The region's working-age population, those between 15 and 64 years of age, is projected to peak at 3.3 billion in the mid-2030s. Between 2023 and 2050, its size is projected to shrink in 20 countries and areas. Unless appropriate labour and social policies are enacted and implemented, considerable economic impacts are inevitable.

Health

The Asia-Pacific region has experienced significant improvements in overall health. Life expectancy at birth has increased by 32 years, from 42.9 years in 1950 to 74.9 years in 2023. Over the past decade, and COVID-19 notwithstanding, the core measures of mortality have continually improved.

Yet, the gap between countries and areas with the highest and lowest life expectancies at birth is almost as great as the gap at the global level. While overall life expectancy is improving, chronic diseases, like heart disease and type 2 diabetes, have become more common and have replaced infectious diseases as the primary cause of ill-health, disability and death (the epidemiological transition). Chronic diseases are both preventable and reversible through dietary and lifestyle changes.

Significant subregional differences in excess deaths attributable to COVID-19 as a percentage of total deaths have been recorded, with some countries in North and Central Asia being hit particularly hard. Beyond mortality, many people still suffer from long COVID, and the related mental health costs associated with loneliness, stress and anxiety have been high.

There have been significant reductions in infant and child mortality. Maternal mortality has also declined in most countries of the region. However, it remains high in several others, often linked to the overall low level of education of the population, urban/rural residence differentials and poverty.

Mostly, more-developed countries in the region have achieved Universal Health Coverage Service Coverage Index values[1] of over 75, on average. Other countries remain far from achieving the SDG universal health coverage target value of 100 by 2030, with many having coverage values below 50. Due to lack of universal health coverage, many people in the region experience financial hardship. It often affects older persons, in particular older women, who generally outlive men.

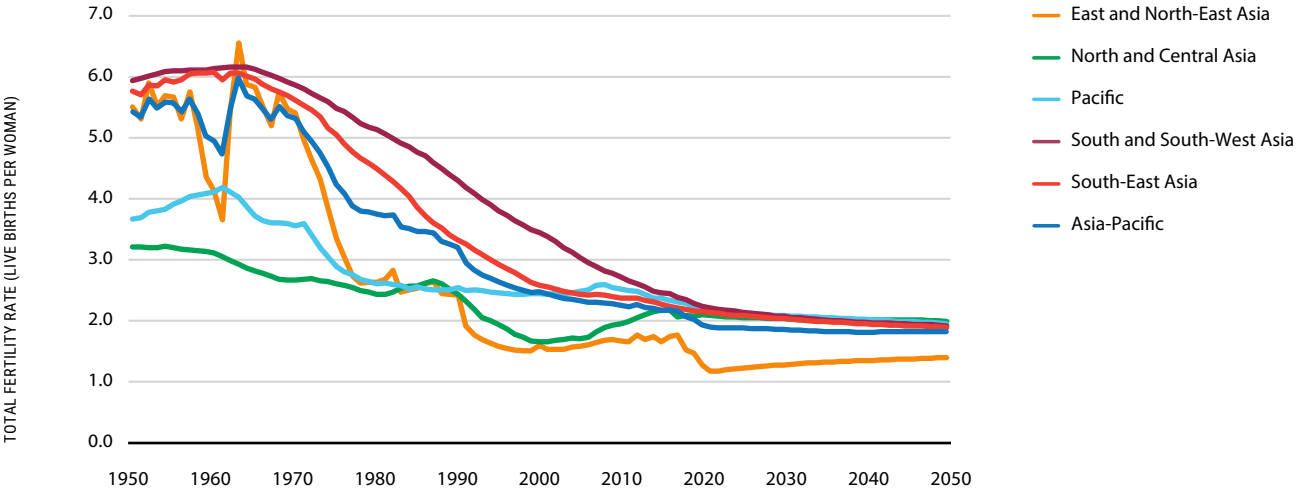
Increases in long-term chronic illnesses place greater burdens on health-care systems. These increases, coupled with higher absolute and relative numbers of older persons and the associated growth in long-term and social care needs, are resulting in sustainable health financing challenges. Telehealth systems can offset certain costs and increase access, as long as there is no digital divide between subpopulations.

1 Measured on a unitless scale of 0 to 100 and based on 14 tracer indicators.

Sexual and reproductive health, services and rights

The region has experienced progress in reaching universal access to comprehensive and integrated quality sexual and reproductive health services, enhancing and respecting reproductive rights, reducing maternal mortality and integrating gender-based violence responses into sexual and reproductive health services. Total fertility has declined and, in some countries, rates are now among the world's lowest, being well below 1 child per woman. More broadly, rates are considerably below 2 children per woman both in historically low-fertility countries and in middle-income countries. However, in several other countries, total fertility rates remain high.

FIGURE B Total fertility rate, in Asia and the Pacific and by subregion, 1950–2050



source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Population Prospects 2022, Online Edition.

There are also significant subnational disparities in fertility, with women in rural areas and in the poorest wealth quintile often having significantly higher fertility rates than other women. Moreover, in recent decades, much progress has been achieved in reducing the rate of births among adolescent mothers, but in many countries, such rates remain high and have stagnated. Early childbearing is generally most common among the poorest, least educated girls in rural communities, underscoring the importance of ensuring that sexual and reproductive health programmes reach those left behind.

Falling fertility rates can be viewed positively as an indicator of increasing reproductive autonomy. However, in many low-fertility societies, gaps exist between reproductive aspirations and actual fertility. These gaps may represent an inability to meet individual reproductive goals, which family planning policies and other interventions may help to bridge. Low fertility rates also worry Governments because they contribute to a stagnation and decline in population size. A rights-based approach to family planning which promotes optimum health, responsibility and family well-being, and respects the dignity of all persons and their right to choose whether or when to get pregnant, as well as the number, spacing and timing of the birth of children, should be pursued.

Increased access to reliable, quality sexual and reproductive health information, education, communication and services, including family planning systems and contraceptive options, has enabled women to delay and space their pregnancies, and has led to declines in both fertility and maternal mortality across the region. Nevertheless, wide variations in contraceptive prevalence rates remain. Generally, unmet need for contraception is particularly high among unmarried adolescents. Furthermore, many women face numerous challenges when using traditional methods in countries with restrictive laws, which may result in unplanned or unintended pregnancies.

Different population groups have specific needs concerning access to reproductive and sexual health services, such as migrant women, women with disabilities or women from ethnic minorities. With many women postponing their childbearing to later in life, there is an increased need to

improve reproductive technologies. Access to such technologies is often limited and not affordable. Countries in the region, given their value systems, also differ in terms of providing such access.

Overall, the number of women giving birth in the presence of a skilled birth attendant has increased significantly in the region. However, women in rural areas and women with less education or in lower wealth quintiles are less likely to give birth with a skilled birth attendant.

Despite noticeable declines in maternal mortality ratios, many countries, mostly in South-East Asia, South and South-West Asia and the Pacific, still experienced maternal mortality ratios between 100—299 per 100,000 live births in 2020. HIV continues to affect the region, with 6.5 million people living with HIV, 300,000 new HIV infections and 150,000 AIDS-related deaths during 2022. Other sexually transmitted infections are highly prevalent, with 44.3 million new cases of gonorrhoea and 1.5 million new cases of syphilis within the World Health Organization South-East Asia and Western Pacific regions combined during 2020.

Education

Educational achievement has increased significantly across the region. The percentage of 20–24-year-olds with only a pre-secondary level of education has nearly halved and the share of those with post-secondary qualifications has increased. Yet, access to education by income level, gender and urban/rural residence varies considerably both between and within countries. This has significant implications for gaining access to decent work later in life.

Continuing education and lifelong learning have become more important in the region, as many populations age. Trade unions play a vital role in reskilling. Lifelong learning programmes, however, are still at a nascent stage in most Asia-Pacific countries, often hampered by the digital divide. Moreover, women and girls are less likely to have access to technology, use the Internet, or own a smartphone compared to men, exacerbating their social exclusion through a gender digital divide. Technical and vocational education and training opportunities continue to be underdeveloped.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

Female labour-force participation is below that of males in most Asia-Pacific countries and is falling in many of them, often because of policies that do not enable women to juggle work and family life. As they grow older, women are at a significant disadvantage compared to men because of years of earning and saving less and, relatedly, because they have fewer benefits, including from pensions. COVID-19 has exacerbated the employment situation of many, including women. Frequently, gender intersects with health, poverty and employment, often to the disadvantage of women. The situation is confounded by there being limited data on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Moreover, women disproportionately shoulder the unpaid burden of care, which restricts their employment opportunities. Women are also not well represented in politics and senior management positions.

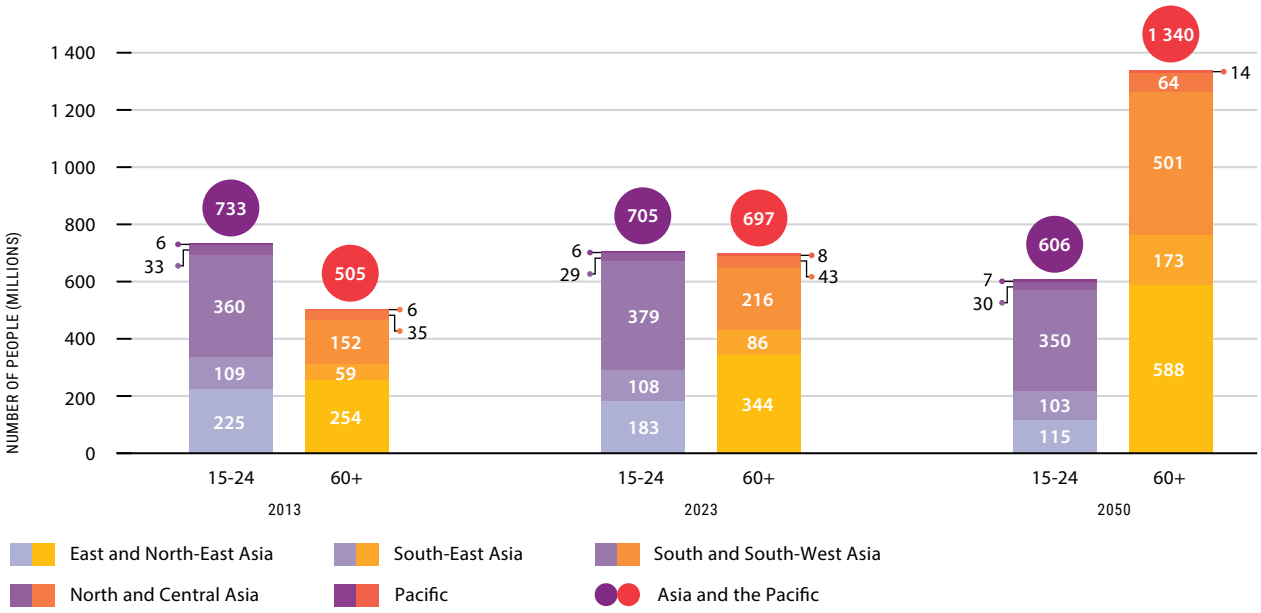
Gender-based violence is deeply rooted in discriminatory social norms and gender inequality. It manifests itself in many ways. Digital and online violence (also referred to as technology-facilitated gender-based violence), which is increasing across the region, is often connected to offline violence. While the vast majority of gender-based violence is perpetuated against women and girls, men and boys are also affected. People who do not conform to social norms regarding sexual orientation or gender identity are often subjected to violence and many are criminalized.

Adolescents and young people

Although fertility is declining across the region, Asia and the Pacific remains home to 56 per cent of the youth population (15—24 years) worldwide, numbering just over 700 million people. Increasing educational attainment is critical for enhancing the capacity of countries to harness the demographic dividend. Access to health, education and decent employment for all young people is equally important.

Due to declining fertility, older persons are already outnumbering youth in several countries. This will become more common across the region. Falling numbers of young people could have serious consequences for their voices being heard in policymaking. This underscores the importance of gender-sensitive, youth-focused policies across sectors, including education, health and labour, as well as leadership opportunities, to ensure young women and men are healthy and educated, to build their skills and to promote their transition to decent employment. Young people are key for inclusive societies, and sustainable development, along with realizing intergenerational solidarity and justice.

FIGURE C Youth population (15-24) and older adult population (60+), by Asia-Pacific subregion, 2013, 2023 and 2050



source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Population Prospects 2022, Online Edition.

Children and adolescents aged 10–14 years are often the most marginalized and the most likely to drop out of school, marry early and be vulnerable to mental health issues. Furthermore, the specific needs of adolescents and other young people are frequently not properly addressed in areas such as comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services.

In addition to high youth unemployment rates in several countries, 24.8 per cent of young people in the region are not in education, employment or training, with the figures being significantly worse for females than for males. This is indicative of labour market constraints and not taking into account the social and gender norms that affect young women.

Ageing

The number of older persons, aged 60 years or over, is projected to double from 697 million in 2023 to 1.3 billion by 2050. Even in populations with relatively young age structures, the number of older persons is projected to increase sharply over the coming decades.

Compared to other regions of the world, population ageing is particularly rapid due to the sharp decline in fertility. The rapid speed of ageing means that there is limited time to prepare for the impacts of ageing on public finances, health care and other services, and to ensure the availability of accessible infrastructure.

The older the total population, the greater the proportion of women. While women live longer, compounding inequalities over the life course mean that women suffer from multiple vulnerabilities relating to health, poverty and isolation.

Given the longer lives of so many people, there is increasing need for long-term care. Most countries in the region, however, lack a systematic approach to providing quality care in an integrated, community-based way. Multigenerational living is still common in the region. However, due to rural to urban migration and lower fertility rates, more older persons, in particular older women, now live alone, compared to many years ago. These changes require a fresh look at care models for older persons.

While the increase in life expectancy is a positive development, a significant number of people live their later years with disabilities. Another consequence of the epidemiological transition is the growing prevalence of chronic diseases such as Alzheimer's, which require complex and long-term care and which will have financial implications on families and governments. Ageing in place and intergenerational living provide opportunities to balance the care burden across generations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown, and often

amplified, critical human rights protection gaps for older persons, such as those related to: discrimination based on age; violence, neglect and abuse; and lack of autonomy and participation in decision-making. These rights violations often exacerbate the health, social and economic situation and overall well-being of older persons.

Across the region, social protection schemes have generally been improved over the past decade; yet their scope, coverage and generosity vary widely. As a consequence, many older persons, in particular older women, are forced to work outside the home to maintain their livelihoods. Restrictive statutory retirement ages often force older persons to seek employment in the informal sector. However, because, over time, older individuals are more likely to be better educated, scope exists for improvements in health and livelihoods. Also, there is potential for a 'second demographic dividend', which relates to how living longer can lead to greater capital accumulation through savings. Increased adult longevity will most likely positively influence the national savings rate.

While many countries in the region are ageing rapidly, several countries are still experiencing large cohorts of youth. Therefore, the future will belong to different generations living together, and intergenerational solidarity is critical for building harmonious and cohesive societies in the future.

International migration

Migration levels in the region remain high, with most international migration occurring between countries in the region. Significant numbers of people, mostly men, migrate from South and South-West Asia to find work in the Middle East. Most migration in the region is work related, and much labour migration is managed through bilateral memorandums of understanding. People also migrate for educational reasons and family formation.

About 50 per cent of migrants are women. As the demand for workers in highly feminized sectors (for example, health care, domestic work, entertainment, manufacturing and textiles) increases, the number of women migrants is projected to rise.

Temporary labour migration programmes may soften the adverse economic impacts of rapid ageing by partially offsetting the expected declines in the domestic labour force. However, political, popular and cultural resistance to large-scale immigration exists across the region. Furthermore, the number of migrants required to keep population age structures constant is unrealistic over the medium-to-long term. Yet, targeted labour migration policies can still offset particular sectoral challenges, such as in the growing care sector. Additional concerns include general labour market shortages in countries of origin, including countries in the Pacific.

Migrants contribute to economies through their remittances. In several countries in Asia and the Pacific, remittances comprise over one fifth of the gross domestic product. Remittances contribute to children's education and care for older persons and ward off poverty. However, remittance costs are often high. In 2021, for the 27 countries with available data, the target of reducing transaction costs for remittances to below 3 per cent by 2030 was met in only 5 countries.

Also, high recruitment costs, poor working conditions, limited access to services, stigma, abuse and rights violations remain a problem for migrant workers. These factors often affect migrant women hired as domestic workers, as well as those engaged in dirty, dangerous and demanding work. To mitigate migrants' vulnerabilities, several Asia-Pacific countries have established policies and schemes that are aligned with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

At the end of 2022, there were about 7.9 million refugees and people in refugee-like situations living in the region. Türkiye, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, the Russian Federation and Bangladesh – in order of largest numbers – alone hosted 91 per cent of all refugees and people in refugee-like situations in the region. Many refugees were children.

About 5.1 million refugees in the region had left their country of origin at the end of 2022, with the majority remaining in the region. Afghanistan, Myanmar and China accounted for some 82 per cent of refugees from the region. In addition to refugees, the numbers of asylum seekers, stateless people and internally displaced people in the region were also high.

Urbanization and internal migration

More than 50 per cent of the population in Asia and the Pacific resides in urban areas. While the Pacific and North and Central Asia are already highly urbanized, the other subregions are urbanizing rapidly, especially East and North-East Asia. In 2020, 19 of the world's 30 largest cities were in the Asia-Pacific region, with a combined population of 360 million. By 2035, five of the world's six most populous cities are projected to be in the Asia-Pacific region. However, urbanization in

most countries is concentrated in small and mid-sized towns and cities.

Urbanization has brought challenges with regard to slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing. For many, especially in the Pacific, despite much progress, it is still difficult to gain access to safe sanitation systems. Also, many cities have inadequate public transport, and residents rely heavily on motorcycles and cars which contributes to bad air quality, affecting the lives of millions. The infrastructure is often not designed with citizens in mind, especially pedestrians, older persons, persons with disabilities or families with young children.

Disasters are a primary driver of forced migration, with climate change being a growing aggravating force. East Asia and South-East Asia have witnessed the most disaster-related displacements, equal to nearly two thirds of the total for the whole Asia-Pacific region, followed closely by South Asia. Floods triggered 90 per cent of this subregion's disaster displacements in 2022. All countries recorded flood displacement, but Pakistan, India and Bangladesh (ordered by number) were the most affected. In Pakistan, record-breaking rainfall and flash flooding from July to September 2022 left 10 per cent of the country under water and led to the highest level of displacement in a decade, with 8.2 million people displaced in 2022 alone, almost two thirds all the subregion's displacements. The people of the Pacific faced the greatest risk of displacement relative to population size. Elsewhere, conflict is shaping and driving forced internal displacement and contributing to increases in the numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers.

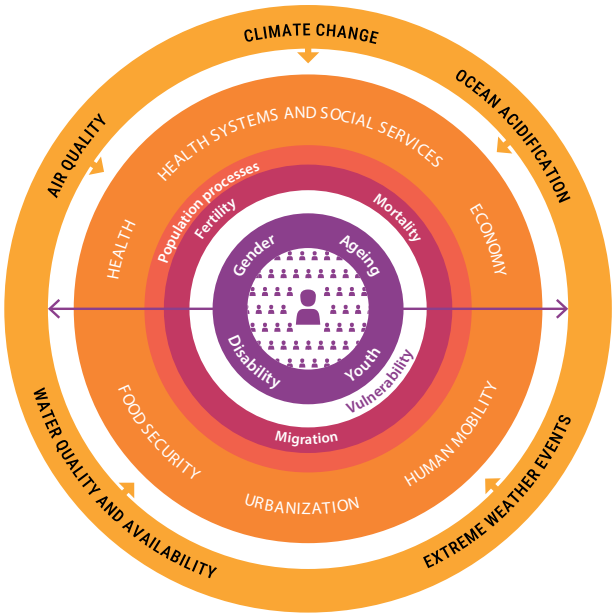
Population and sustainable development

Asia and the Pacific is the region most prone to climate-induced disasters, which have increased in frequency and intensity. Its people are highly dependent on natural resources and agriculture, and often live in densely populated coastal areas. Many countries have weak institutions and lack social protection. Poverty remains widespread.

The region faces numerous environmental threats, including slow-onset disasters from sea-level rise and drought and sudden-onset disasters such as typhoons, hurricanes and floods. In 2021, over 100 natural hazards occurred in Asia, of which 80 per cent were floods and storms. These resulted in around 4,000 deaths. Overall, 48.3 million people were directly affected, causing $35.6 billion in economic damages.

Climate change directly affects people's lives, health and well-being; furthermore, it intensifies socioeconomic disparities, contributes to population displacement and exacerbates conflicts. Persons in vulnerable situations are disproportionately affected by climate change.

FIGURE D Relationship between climate change and population dynamics



source: ESCAP, elaboration based on Raworth, Kate. 'A Doughnut for the Anthropocene: Humanity's Compass in the 21st Century'. The Lancet Planetary Health, vol. 1, No. 2 (1 May 2017): e48–49, https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(17)30028-1.

The activities carried out by people in Asia and the Pacific also contribute significantly to climate change. In 2020, the region accounted for more than half of global greenhouse gas emissions and its share continues to increase as populations grow and economies continue to be powered by fossil fuels. Emissions have more than doubled since 1990, driven by the electricity generation, manufacturing and transport sectors. The region also accounts for over half of global energy consumption, with 85 per cent of that energy being sourced from fossil fuels. Many people still lack access to electricity and continue to rely on traditional biomass (such as burning wood) for cooking and heating. In general, countries in the region are regressing on climate action (SDG 13).

Protecting the environment is vital for strengthening capacity in the areas of mitigation and resilience. In fact, community-based climate activism represents a

critical step towards developing sustainable resiliency. Furthermore, education is essential for raising awareness and building resilience.

Data and statistics

Data are important to accelerate progress on and evaluate the status of implementation of the priority actions of APMD. At the regional level, there is sufficient data to report between 50 to 60 per cent of the indicators set out in the voluntary national monitoring framework. Significant data gaps exist on SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 14 (life below water) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

Across the region, there is progress towards the completion of census and civil registration and vital statistics systems. Most Asia-Pacific countries conducted a population and housing census between 2010 and 2019.

In the past decade, demographic and health surveys have been carried out across the region, including in several low-income countries. Multiple indicator cluster surveys have been conducted in most countries, generating data on the well-being of children and women. Moreover, comparative, harmonized longitudinal surveys have been developed, although more needs to be done to enable subnational analysis. National Transfer Accounts have been calculated in approximately half of the region's countries.

New technologies are making it easier to collect data, and the increasing availability of geolocation data can enhance understanding of socioeconomic issues. Big data are also being integrated more, complementing traditional data.



Conclusions and recommendations

The Asia-Pacific region is at a crossroads. It has made significant progress in terms of socioeconomic development but faces significant challenges. Moreover, many countries in the region continue to deal with persistent socioeconomic inequalities (including gender inequality), ageism and disrespect for human rights, internal displacement, poverty and limited access to health, education and employment. Inequalities and vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by climate change, disasters, conflicts, the COVID-19 pandemic and digital transformations. Limited financial resources, capacities and data make it difficult to fully implement the priority actions set out in APMD.

To harness the opportunities and challenges of the population dynamics in Asia and the Pacific, the following overarching recommendations are presented (with more specific recommendations listed at the end of each chapter). In view of important trends related to the demographic transition and changing age structures in Asia and the Pacific, recommendations regarding a people-centred and life-course approach to population and development and intergenerational relations are listed in the beginning:

1 **Follow a holistic, people-centred, rights-based and gender-sensitive approach**: Rather than focusing on one population and development challenge or opportunity at a time, efforts should be made to address intersecting linkages and consider how action (or inaction) today affects outcomes for current and future generations.

2 **Apply a life-course approach to population and development**: People, in all their diversity, have different and changing needs, from birth through adolescence to adulthood and old age. What happens earlier in life has consequences for later life. Targeted investments are required at key life stages to reduce poverty and vulnerabilities, especially for girls and women, while there is also a need to facilitate their empowerment.

3 **Strengthen intergenerational relations and solidarity**: As life expectancies increase, more people of different age groups are living together for longer periods. Intergenerational solidarity for current and future generations is required, based upon an understanding that every person should live through childhood, youth, middle- and old-age in dignity and optimal health. Long-term planning is needed to deliver prosperity to all members of present and future generations.

4 **Expand health-care coverage**: Health-care coverage, including sexual and reproductive health services should be made accessible to all – including adolescents and young people – free from discrimination and stigma. View health care as a life-course investment throughout all life stages (for instance, healthy development from birth to old age). Address the social determinants of health, and abolish financial and societal barriers to health. Use affordable and accessible health-sector innovations and technologies, and make health care people-centred, community-based and integrated. Increase health promotion and health literacy; assist caregivers and recognize their contributions, in particular those of women; and develop human resources for health.

5 **Provide universal social protection over the life course**: Investments in basic social protection immediately reduce poverty, inequalities and purchasing power disparities. Make targeted investments and provide protections that recognize the gender-differentiated vulnerabilities of girls, young women and older women.

6 **Create 'future-ready' education systems and pathways for decent work and flexible work environments:** Lifelong learning and work in different and productive ways need to be promoted especially for youth, women, persons with disabilities, older persons and migrants. Achieving gender parity in the workforce is the most effective way of increasing productivity and income, while training, upskilling and reskilling opportunities should be available to all. This will contribute to maintaining the productivity of the labour force in rapidly ageing societies.

7 **Enhance gender equality and women's empowerment**: Gender mainstreaming and the strengthening of legal frameworks to end gender discrimination need to be prioritized. investments in gender-sensitive budgeting will benefit such actions.

8 **Give precedence to low-carbon pathways and focus on developing climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience-building strategies that leave no one behind**: Climate change threatens all aspects of life and must be prioritized and mainstreamed in every domain of policymaking. Link strategies on social protection with those on climate change, including through engaging persons in vulnerable situations

in the design, creation, implementation and monitoring of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

9 **Strengthen the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated data at the national and subnational level**: Data on SDG-based population and development indicators must be prioritized so that countries can monitor the status of implementation of APMD. Strengthen the capacity of people working with data to build a more effective evidence base.

10 **Ensure that data and information on population dynamics and projections inform policymaking and public discourse**: The capacity of relevant institutions needs to be strengthened to ensure effective integration of population issues into development planning, including ensuring effective coordination of all relevant planning bodies, along with multisectoral and multistakeholder approaches for implementation of APMD. Ensure that data privacy and ethics are respected in these processes.

11 **Strengthen partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders**: This should include partnerships among political and opinion leaders, community and religious leaders, educators, the private sector, philanthropic organizations, grass-roots organizations and persons with lived experience. In a globalized world, population and development challenges and opportunities are connected across boundaries, from the local to the national, regional and global levels. Policies, plans and strategies need to make this a reality.

12 **Provide an enabling, non-discriminatory, safe and inclusive environment for the participation of civil society and community-based organizations**: All stakeholders need to be engaged in dialogue and decision-making, based on diversity, equity and inclusion principles. Increase space for constructive dialogue at different geographic and political levels. Political will and collaboration between diverse stakeholders are crucial to develop and implement forward-looking, people-centred policies.

13 **Promote regional cooperation, including South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation**: Such cooperation is vital for accelerating the implementation of APMD and the ICPD Programme of Action, including on the use of information and communications technologies. Encourage the sharing of successful experiences and good practices among countries in Asia and the Pacific.

14 **Ensure adequate financing**: This is needed to fully implement the recommendations of APMD and the ICPD Programme of Action in all countries in Asia and the Pacific, through new and additional resources. Support public-private initiatives and domestic resource mobilization and resource tracking. Ensure the continuation and fulfilment of official development assistance commitments made by international donors.

15 **Build commitment to population and development issues at the highest level**: This would include ensuring that a national focal point agency at the highest political level is designated to coordinate the full and effective implementation of APMD as well as of the ICPD Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific. Review the implementation of APMD on a regular basis, and more frequently than every 10 years.

Contents

Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report 2023 **i**

Acknowledgements ii

Foreword iii

Foreword iv

Executive summary v

Report on the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference **1**

Annex I 7

Annex II 8

Report on the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference



I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

A Matters calling for action by the Commission

1 The following recommendations of the Asian and Pacific Population Conference are brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for its consideration and possible action:

Recommendation 1

The Asian and Pacific Population Conference recommends that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific and the United Nations Population Fund, within their respective mandates, continue to support Commission members and associate members in the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, taking into account the views and positions of member States on the Ministerial Declaration, and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of its reviews, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, at the national and regional levels.

Recommendation 2

The Asian and Pacific Population Conference requests the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund and all other relevant partners, to conduct a regional intergovernmental review meeting of the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific, in 2028, and to submit the report on the regional meeting to the Commission at its eighty-fifth session.

B Matters brought to the attention of the Commission

2 The following decision adopted by the Asian and Pacific Population Conference is brought to the attention of ESCAP:

Decision

The Asian and Pacific Population Conference decides to transmit the report on its Seventh Conference to the Commission on Population and Development at its fifty-seventh session, to be held in 2024, to help inform the assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

II. Organization

A Opening, duration and organization of the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference

3 The Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference, which was held in Bangkok and online from 15 to 17 November 2023, was opened by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Minister of Social Development and Human Security of Thailand, Mr. Varawut Silpa-archa, made statements. Ms. Laisa Bulatale, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, and Ms. Sangay Dechen Gyanzo, Youth Peer Education Network Bhutan, spoke on behalf of civil society.

B Attendance

4 Representatives of the following member States of ESCAP attended: Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

5 Representatives of the following associate members of ESCAP also attended: Cook Islands and Niue.

6 Representatives of the following Permanent Observers to ESCAP attended: Belarus, Holy See and South Africa.

7 Representatives of the following offices of the Secretariat attended: Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

8 Representatives of the following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, funds and related organizations also attended: International Organization for Migration, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNFPA, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and World Health Organization.

9 A representative of the Economic Cooperation Organization, an intergovernmental organization, also attended.

10 Representatives of the following non-governmental and civil society organizations attended: 2030 Youth Force Indonesia; Ageing Nepal; Asia Feminist LBQ Network; Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women; Asian Population Association; Asia-Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; Asia-Pacific Mission for Migrants; Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education; Association of Youth Organizations Nepal; Bangladesh Youth Health Action Network; Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal; Blind Youth Association Nepal; Blue Diamond Society; BRAC; Bumi Setara; Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population; Child Helpline Cambodia; China Family Planning Association; China Youth Network; Circle of Young Minds for Research and Development Career; College of Youth Activism and Development; Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility; David and Lucile Packard Foundation; Development Action for Women Network; Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era; Equal Asia Foundation; Equality Now; Family Planning 2030; Family Planning New Zealand; Family Planning NSW; Family Planning Organization of the Philippines; Fiji Women's Rights Movement; Films 4 Peace Foundation;

First Pasefika Fono Network; Forum for Dignity Initiatives; Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti; HealthNet TPO; HelpAge India; Hope for Women; Human Development Organization; International Community of Women Living with HIV Asia-Pacific; International Migrant Alliance Research Foundation; International Planned Parenthood Federation, East and Southeast Asia and Oceania region; International Planned Parenthood Federation, South Asia region; Inti Muda Indonesia; Life Savors; Likhaan Center for Women's Health Inc.; Malaysian Youth Diplomacy (MyDiplomacy); Medical Services in the Pacific; Me For Myself International Campaign for Mental Health and Well-being; Monfemnet National Network; Nagorik Uddyog; Naripokkho; Pacific Disability Forum; Pakistan Rural Workers Social Welfare Organization; Plan International Asia-Pacific; Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand; Population Foundation of India; Rahnuma Family Planning Association of Pakistan; Rural Women's Social Education Centre; Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George; Samahan ng mga DH sa Gitnang Silangan; SERAC-Bangladesh; Seven Sisters Foundation; Sherpa for Change; Soroptimist International; SPEAK Trust; The Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka; The Young Changemakers; The YP Foundation; Tsao Foundation; United Filipinos in Korea; United Nations Foundation; United Nations Youth Advisory Panel Cambodia; United Nations Youth Advisory Panel Mongolia; Visible Impact; Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights; Women's Rehabilitation Centre; Working Group on Disabilities and 2030 Agenda; Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan; Yayasan Tabu Indonesia Berdaya (Tabu.id); YIELD Hub; Young Advocates for SRHR; Youth Advocacy Network Sri Lanka; Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights; Youth Interfaith Forum on Sexuality Indonesia; Youth Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Development; Youth Peer Education Network Asia-Pacific; Youth Peer Education Network Bhutan; Youth Peer Education Network Philippines; Youth Peer Education Network Thailand; Youth Voices Count; and YUWA.

11 Representatives of the following other entities also attended: International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta.

12 In accordance with rule 12 of the rules of procedure of ESCAP, the Chair and Vice-Chairs examined the credentials of all the representatives and found them to be in order.

13 The Conference took note of the oral report of the bureau on credentials.

C Election of officers

14 The Conference elected the following officers:

Chair:	Mr. Varawut Silpa-archa (Thailand)
Vice-Chairs:	Ms. Lisa Grace Bersales (Philippines) Ms. Eselealofa Apinelu (Tuvalu)

D Agenda

15 The Conference adopted the following agenda:

i. Opening of the Conference:

   a. Opening addresses;

   b. Election of officers;

   c. Adoption of the agenda.

ii. Review of progress made towards the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific.

iii. Thematic discussion on achievements, challenges, gaps and emerging issues in the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific:

a. Population dynamics, sustainable development and climate change;

b. Health, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights;

c. Inequalities and social exclusion, and rights;

d. Partnerships and regional cooperation.

e. Other matters.

f. Adoption of the report on the Conference.

E Other events

16 The following seminars, side events and special sessions were held in conjunction with the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference:

a. 13 and 14 November 2023, civil society and youth forums, organized by the civil society organization steering committee of the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference;

b. 15 November 2023, side event on understanding the challenges, opportunities and best practices for the sexual and reproductive health and rights of forcibly displaced women and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and other people on the move in transition countries in Asia, organized by the Asia-Pacific Alliance on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, the Asia-Pacific Refugee Rights Network, the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, the Equal Asia Foundation and the International Lesbian and Gay Association Asia;

c. 15 November 2023, side event: "Harvesting the demographic dividend to achieve the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development: experiences from China since 1994", organized by the China Population and Development Research Center in collaboration with the China Family Planning Association and the UNFPA country office in China;

d. 15 November 2023, side event: "Population and development outlooks and challenges in South-East Asia", jointly organized by the National Population and Family Planning Board of Indonesia, the Commission on Population and Development of the Philippines and the UNFPA country offices in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand;

e. 16 November 2023, side event: "The changing realities of population in Asia and the Pacific: low fertility and population ageing in the post-COVID-19 era", organized by the Asian Population Association;

f. 16 November 2023, side event on a contraceptive policy atlas for Asia and the Pacific, organized by the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights; Family Planning 2030; and International Planned Parenthood Federation, East and Southeast Asia and Oceania region;

g. 16 November 2023, side event: "Maldives and Solomon Islands at the crossroads to achieving sustainable socioeconomic development as small island developing States", organized by the Maldives Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination of Solomon Islands;

h. 17 November 2023, side event: "Leaving no one behind: don't forget deaf women! The importance of the reproductive rights of deaf women and of sign language-based communication", organized by ESCAP and the Nippon Foundation;

i. 17 November 2023, side event: "Rights-based approaches as the foundation to achieving just and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific", organized by the Government of Bangladesh; the Asia-Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; the David and Lucile Packard Foundation; Equality Now; Family Planning 2030, Asia and the Pacific Hub; International Planned Parenthood Federation, East and Southeast Asia and Oceania region; SERAC-Bangladesh; and the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights;

j. 17 November 2023, side event: "Migrants and refugees as actors of development: bringing and amplifying migrants' and refugees' voices in the population and development discourse", organized by the Asia-Pacific Mission for Migrants;

k. 17 November 2023, side event on harnessing lessons learned in the region to accelerate reductions in maternal morbidity and mortality: experiences gained in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka with the aim of achieving the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, organized by the Government of Nepal and UNFPA;

l. 17 November 2023, side event: "Getting everyone in the picture: investing in children", organized by ESCAP, the UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office and Vital Strategies;

m. 17 November 2023, side event on scaling up humanitarian financing for sexual and reproductive health and rights and family planning in emergencies in Asia and the Pacific, organized by Family Planning 2030.

III. Chair's summary

17 The discussions held during the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference have been summarized in a Chair's summary (see annex II).

Annex I

List of documents

Symbol	Title	Agenda item
General series		
ESCAP/APPC(7)/1/Rev.1	Provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/APPC(7)/1/Add.1	Annotated provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/APPC(7)/2/Rev.1	Review of progress made towards the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific	2 and 3
ESCAP/APPC(7)/3	Impacts of climate change on population and development in Asia and the Pacific	2 and 3
ESCAP/APPC(7)/4	Report on the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference	
Limited series		
ESCAP/APPC(7)/L.1	Draft report	5
Information series		
ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/1	Implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific: a summary of the outcomes of stakeholder consultations	2 and 3
ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/2	Implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific: a summary of the results of voluntary national surveys reported by member States	2 and 3
ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/3	Gender equality and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in Asia and the Pacific	2 and 3
ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/4	Universal health care in Asia and the Pacific	2 and 3
ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/5	Data and statistics to monitor the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific	2 and 3
Information available online		
www.unescap.org/events/2023/seventh-asian-and-pacific-population-conference	Information for participants List of participants Tentative programme	

Annex II

Chair's summary

Introduction

1 The Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference was held in Bangkok and online from 15 to 17 November 2023. In total, 276 representatives of member States participated in person and 16 participated online; and 147 representatives of civil society organizations and other entities participated in person and 2 participated online.

Summary of discussions

A Review of progress made towards the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific (agenda item 2)

2 The Asian and Pacific Population Conference had before it the notes by the secretariat on the review of progress made towards the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/APPC(7)/2/Rev.1) and on the impacts of climate change on population and development in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/APPC(7)/3), as well as five information documents (ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/1, ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/2, ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/3, ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/4 and ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/5).

3 The Conference heard a high-level panel discussion that was moderated by the Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The panellists were: Senior Adviser and Distinguished Professor at the Ramalingaswami Centre on Equity and Social Determinants of Health, Public Health Foundation of India, Ms. Gita Sen; Visiting Fellow at the Asian Development Bank Institute, Mr. Naohiro Ogawa; and Director of Women's Affairs at the Ministry of Justice and Community Services of Vanuatu, Ms. Rothina Ilo Noka.

4 The panellists discussed the progress that had been made in Asia and the Pacific since the First Asian Population Conference, held in 1963, and since the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, held in 2013. Improvements had been made in education, including for marginalized groups, and in access to health care, for example in the areas of maternal and sexual and reproductive health care. Specifically, access to safe abortion services, modern contraceptives and comprehensive sexuality education had increased and there had been reductions in poverty. At the same time, much work remained to be done, particularly in further reducing maternal mortality and countering gender-based violence. The panellists noted the emerging and persistent challenges linked to low fertility, population ageing, an increase in violence against marginalized groups, gender-based violence and the effects of climate change, including sea level rise, which particularly affected populations in vulnerable situations.

5 To address those challenges, the panellists recommended that legislation be passed to address gender-based violence, that data be used for evidence-based policymaking and that attention be paid to good governance and to strengthening dialogue and genuine engagement with civil society organizations, among other stakeholders. Access to health care in ageing societies was crucial for ensuring that people remained healthy for longer. Also, older persons should be viewed as a resource rather than a burden to society. Changes in attitudes on ageing and care provision were required to address demographic shifts.

6 Representatives of the following member States made statements: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russian Federation, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

7 Representatives of the following associate members also made statements: Cook Islands

(on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States and territories) and Niue.

8 A representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, an office of the Secretariat, made a statement.

9 Representatives of the following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds also made statements: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

10 Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other entities also made statements: Asia Feminist LBQ Network, Bangladesh Youth Health Action Network, Blind Youth Association Nepal, First Pasefika Fono Network, Forum for Dignity Initiatives, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Community of Women Living with HIV Asia-Pacific, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and The Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka.

11 The Conference reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and representatives reported on actions taken to mainstream population and development issues, including into national development plans. The Conference reaffirmed its commitment to the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development. While significant achievements were identified, the emerging and persistent challenges linked with inequality, conflict, disasters, food insecurity, digital transformation and the effects of climate change, including sea level rise, were noted with concern. Regional cooperation was viewed as crucial to addressing those challenges.

12 Poverty and socioeconomic disparities, including in urban areas, youth unemployment and the loss of human resources, all of which were exacerbated by global crises, threatened to undermine efforts to achieve inclusive development. Several representatives reported on initiatives to strengthen social protection, address discrimination against marginalized groups and promote decent work and job creation. One representative reported on efforts made to enable people to live a life of dignity, for example through increased sanitation coverage.

13 Several representatives reported on national universal health-care systems that provided primary health care and on investments in training health workers. However, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had had a negative impact on the provision of health-care services, with women, older persons, persons with disabilities and migrants being among those most affected. While significant progress had been made in the response to HIV, concerns remained, in particular the vulnerability of young key populations. Additional concerns were raised with regard to non-communicable diseases and initiatives to address them were noted.

14 The Conference heard about improvements made in neonatal, infant and maternal mortality by providing comprehensive information packages on sexual and reproductive health and services and on skilled birth assistance, as well as by providing skilled birth assistance. Improvements had also been made in family planning programmes, and greater attention had been paid to adolescent health, to advocacy, capacity-building and community engagement focused on reproductive rights, especially among socially disadvantaged groups, and to the need for contraception. The reproductive rights of women with disabilities were stressed.

15 Several representatives expressed a commitment to ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services and information and to providing comprehensive sexuality education. Some representatives called for efforts to be made to raise awareness, engage young persons and marginalized groups and collaborate across sectors.

16 Legal frameworks to protect the girl child had been developed and women's health had been prioritized at the national level with the aim of improving health outcomes for all women and girls. Several representatives reported on measures taken to reduce child marriage and reiterated their Governments' commitment to ending child marriage.

17 Several representatives noted that significant achievements had been made in access to education, leading to increased literacy.

Acknowledging the critical role of education for the empowerment of girls, several representatives reported on efforts to improve gender parity in educational enrolment, high female completion rates and inclusive education programmes to promote equal opportunities, including for persons with disabilities. Persistent gaps in access to educational resources and infrastructure were noted. Furthermore, the importance of providing comprehensive sexuality education was highlighted, including through action plans aimed at empowering young people to make informed decisions, preventing sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies and gender-based violence and promoting healthy attitudes.

18 Addressing gender inequality was acknowledged as a priority by some representatives, given that it limited social progress, hindered cohesion in society and acted as a barrier to economic growth. Several representatives reported on progress made towards gender equality by, for example: increasing the share of parliamentary seats held by women; ensuring that members of all groups, including those of differing sexual orientations, lived a life of dignity; creating equal employment opportunities for all groups, irrespective of gender; implementing programmes to support women and girls, including those with disabilities; enacting legislation to guarantee the rights of the women; and ensuring that policies were gender-responsive and transformative. Several representatives highlighted gender-based violence as a persistent social scourge. One representative emphasized the need to reduce women's drudgery, for example through the provision of clean cooking fuel and safe drinking water.

19 Several representatives emphasized that achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as harnessing the demographic dividend, depended on investing in young people and addressing youth unemployment. It was reported that efforts had been made to strengthen health systems, for example by providing financing to increase access to contraceptives and youth-friendly health services, including for vulnerable groups; to address stigma and discrimination faced by youth, including youth with disabilities; and to invest in youth skills development and vocational training. Other developments included rendering national economic and political decision-making processes inclusive of and responsive to the needs of youth, expressing a political commitment to enabling youth to participate in planning for their health and well-being, and reaching youth in school and out-of-school settings.

20 Rapid population ageing was noted as a concern by several representatives, as were significant declines in fertility. Several representatives reported on initiatives to address vulnerability in older age and promote active ageing through the passage of legislation on the care of older persons and the provision of social insurance, medical care and home support programmes for older persons. As the countries in the region were at different stages of the demographic transition, it was important to promote intergenerational solidarity and international cooperation to share knowledge and conduct joint work.

21 The role of migration in economic and social development, as well as the contribution of migrants, was stressed. Several representatives raised concerns, including about the need to pay greater attention to ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration; the consequences for countries of origin of workers migrating elsewhere; and the many challenges faced by migrants, especially in relation to work, social inclusion, health care, housing and sanitation. Several representatives reported on measures taken to protect the rights of migrant workers and provide social protection. One representative noted the need to provide refugees with access to basic services, while other representatives reported on specific actions taken to do so. A call was made for experiences in migration management in the region to be shared.

22 It was noted that the existence of health, education and job opportunities in cities was the main reason for rural-to-urban migration. It was also noted that such migration strained urban infrastructure and services. Efforts were required to empower young people, especially girls, to ensure informed decision-making and address youth unemployment. Information was shared on initiatives aimed at encouraging people to stay in rural areas or at expanding urban infrastructure to deal with rapid urbanization.

23 The progress that had been made on population and sustainable development issues was being challenged by a number of critical and existential threats, including climate change, sea level rise, floods and other natural disasters, conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic and the digital divide. While women and girls and persons with disabilities were disproportionately affected by those challenges, everyone's livelihoods were affected. Limited access to basic services, including sexual and reproductive health services, was a particular concern. More attention needed to be paid to social and gender dimensions, more support was needed for persons with disabilities and more needed to be invested in community resilience-building, including for capacity development, data for humanitarian preparedness and response, and early warning systems. Climate change-related vulnerability had resulted in a high rate of displacement, an increase in the number of climate refugees and the proliferation of informal settlements.

24 It was acknowledged that there were not enough timely and reliable data and statistics for evidence-based policymaking and that more needed to be done to improve the quality of data, including administrative data; the frequency with which data were collected; capacity; and the monitoring of progress. Several representatives reported on efforts to enhance the collection, analysis and dissemination of data and statistics, including through new technologies or legislation and the establishment of local data repositories and community-based monitoring systems.

25 Several representatives recommended adopting strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation and for disaster risk reduction to support marginalized groups. Moreover, more effective partnerships among civil society, government and the private sector were needed. Young people of all backgrounds should be empowered in decision-making processes, including through youth advisory boards or councils at various levels of government.

26 Some representatives noted that the documentation for the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference should have been aligned with the terms and definitions in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and they therefore expressed their objection to the use of several concepts and certain terminology.

27 Representatives of non-governmental and civil society organizations underscored the need to protect and promote the sexual and reproductive health and rights and bodily autonomy of individuals belonging to marginalized groups and to address the shrinking civic space. Implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development should be monitored by using its indicator framework, among other methods, to promote inclusion and access to infrastructure and information systems for persons with diverse disabilities. It was noted that, especially during climate change-induced disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic, some marginalized populations were unable to enjoy their sexual and reproductive health and rights or have access to services and information. That situation was exacerbated by limited access to comprehensive sexuality education and by exposure to discrimination and violence. In the light of rapid population ageing, there was a need for rights-based approaches to support older persons, especially older women, including by developing age-friendly communities and eliminating all forms of discrimination. Young people living with HIV, women, girls, persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, Indigenous peoples, sex workers, people living in humanitarian crisis owing to conflict and climate change-induced disasters, migrants and refugees continued to experience inequalities and inequities and to face human rights violations, stigma and discrimination. These challenges had to be addressed by facilitating access to services and decent work.

B Thematic discussion on achievements, challenges, gaps and emerging issues in the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific (agenda item 3)

28 The Conference had before it the notes by the secretariat on the review of progress made towards the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population

and Development, as well as of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/APPC(7)/2/Rev.1) and on the impacts of climate change on population and development in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/APPC(7)/3), as well as five information documents (ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/1, ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/2, ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/3, ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/4 and ESCAP/APPC(7)/INF/5).

Population dynamics, sustainable development and climate change (agenda item 3 (a))

29 The Conference heard a panel discussion that was moderated by Professor of Social Science, Khalifa University of Science and Technology, United Arab Emirates, Mr. Stuart Gietel-Basten. The panellists were: the Director of the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat; Team Leader of the Gender and Transitional Justice Programme, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Ms. Laisa Bulatale; Co-founder of Himalayan Innovations, Ms. Sadikshya Aryal; and the Minister of Social Development and Human Security of Thailand, Mr. Varawut Silpa-archa.

30 The panellists noted the challenges posed by demographic extremes, such as populations with very high or very low fertility rates, in particular when caused by rapid changes. They added that demographic change was itself a key challenge, on a par with climate change and the increase in conflict in the region and globally. However, people were adaptable and new policies should be introduced, mindful always of the need to respect peoples' rights, including by addressing the high levels of gender-based violence in some subregions and the insufficiency of resources to combat discrimination against women and girls. The interlinkages and intersectionality of vulnerabilities were stressed, such as those experienced by women with disabilities and by young people in rural areas, who were among those most at risk of being left behind. Research and data analysis conducted by non-governmental organizations could support efforts to identify such intersectionality. The panellists also discussed the linkages between population dynamics and climate change. In the Pacific, people were forced to migrate because of sea level rise.

31 The panellists suggested that the following measures be taken to address the challenges related to population dynamics and sustainable development: ensure active, healthy and inclusive ageing; provide social protection coverage over the life course, including through pensions; encourage people to stay in the workforce for longer; strengthen gender equality in society; recognize the care work done by women and encourage a change in attitudes to care work; and balance the distribution of household tasks. In order to reduce the human imprint on the environment, it was important to change attitudes and consumption patterns and provide incentives for people to make the right decisions. That could include adopting more climate-friendly farming methods, taking measures to reduce air pollution and sharing knowledge across generations on sustainable farming and herding. The importance of empowering young people in their communities and of fostering intergenerational initiatives to address climate change was highlighted. Sex-disaggregated data for evidence-based policymaking and gender-based budgeting were crucial.

32 Representatives of the following member States made statements: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands (on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States and territories), Philippines, Russian Federation, Thailand, Timor-Leste and United States.

33 A representative of the Cook Islands also made a statement.

34 Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other entities also made statements: Life Savors and Pacific Disability Forum.

35 Several representatives noted the achievements made on population and development, including increases in living standards and education levels, as well as reductions in poverty. However, the interplay between population dynamics, efforts to achieve sustainable development and climate change had led to new challenges. It was noted that rapid urbanization posed persisting challenges.

36 Several representatives reported on progress made in their countries to empower women and girls by increasing literacy, school enrolment rates and education levels and by expanding employment opportunities.

37 Despite the progress made, gender inequality persisted in many areas and needed to be addressed.

38 The demographic transition, characterized by rapidly declining fertility rates and ageing societies, was highlighted. Policies addressing different stages of the life cycle, such as those focusing on the provision of education, vocational training and workforce skills, were noted. Some representatives recommended creating decent jobs, addressing inequalities and establishing comprehensive pension systems. In small island developing States, emigration had led to a shortage of skilled workers.

39 Concern was raised about the low fertility rates; addressing them required multifaceted approaches and collaborative efforts. Some representatives noted the need to change attitudes towards and the value ascribed to families. Some representatives reiterated the need for gender equality and a more equal distribution of care work. One representative called for the voices and experiences of women to be heard in all decision-making.

40 Several representatives reported on policies and incentives aimed at increasing fertility, such as paid maternity and parental leave, the availability of childcare and preschool institutions, flexible working arrangements, cash transfers and subsidized housing loans.

41 Many representatives said that the detrimental impacts of climate change on their populations, particularly the populations of small island developing States, had to be addressed. The rise in poverty caused by climate change had led to limited access to reproductive health services and exposure to gender-based violence, including early and forced marriage.

42 Several representatives reported on climate change- and population-related policies and innovative approaches that fostered collaboration and encouraged learning from successes and setbacks to leave no one behind. In that context, some representatives recalled the global commitments made to provide funding for climate change mitigation and adaptation to vulnerable developing countries and stressed the need for financial and technical support from partners.

43 Civil society representatives reported that disasters had negatively affected access to services and schools for girls, particularly in rural communities. Persons with disabilities were disproportionately affected by climate change and disasters, which further exacerbated and compounded their discrimination and exclusion.

Health, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (agenda item 3 (b))

44 The Conference heard a panel discussion that was moderated by Associate Professor, Faculty of Medicine, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Thailand, Ms. Fingani A. Mphande-Nyasulu. The panellists were: Director General of Health Services at the Ministry of Health of Sri Lanka, Dr. Asela Gunawardena; Chief Strategy Officer of the Tsao Foundation, Mr. Paul Ong; Visiting Distinguished Faculty, International Institute for Population Sciences, Ms. Shireen Jejeebhoy; and Executive Director of the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, Ms. Sivananthi Thanenthiran.

45 The panellists stressed the importance of and the progress that had been achieved in access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. However, gender inequality, intimate partner violence and skewed sex ratios at birth persisted in several countries. Despite the rapid decline in fertility rates, there was still an unmet need for contraception and access to safe abortion in line with guidelines of the World Health Organization. People in marginalized situations, including women with disabilities, continued to face challenges in exercising their sexual and reproductive rights. It was also noted that many women had limited access to treatment for infertility.

46 The panellists also stressed the importance of promoting universal access to health care and of taking a whole-of-government, multisectoral and forward-looking approach, including to sexual and reproductive health. Ageing societies required a shift in health-

care policy and the adoption of an integrated life course approach. Care work needed to be rethought: the value of such work should be recognized and increased; caregivers should be remunerated and covered by social protection; and the work itself should be redistributed. Individuals and couples should be able to exercise their reproductive rights. Better-quality disaggregated data on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights was needed, and there should be no age limit.

47 Representatives of the following member States made statements: Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, Philippines, Samoa (on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States and territories) and United States.

48 A representative of the World Health Organization also made a statement.

49 Representatives of the following civil society organizations and other entities made statements: Medical Services in the Pacific and Population Foundation of India.

50 Several representatives reiterated their countries' commitment to promoting sexual and reproductive health as outlined in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and shared information on national policies and plans for its implementation. Achievements in improving maternal, child and reproductive health and in meeting the need for modern contraceptive methods were noted.

51 Several representatives emphasized the need to focus on adolescent health care and shared information on measures taken in that regard. For example, steps had been taken to establish national centres for providing health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, for adolescents, to create a supportive social environment and to enhance access to contraceptives. The importance of offering a comprehensive sexuality education and of educating men and boys on sexual and reproductive health issues was underscored.

52 Some representatives stressed that making progress on sexual and reproductive health and rights was fundamental to achieving gender equality. One representative stressed the need to promote and protect the human rights of all women, girls, persons with disabilities, sexual minorities and, in particular, those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Another representative reported on the establishment of an advisory council to provide strategic advice to the Government to improve the health outcomes of women and girls and to actively examine and address gender bias in the health system.

53 More needed to be done to ensure universal access to health care and to fully integrate sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as long-term care, into universal and integrated health-care systems. Some representatives shared information on efforts made to engage educational institutions and employers in implementing health policies. The importance of working with communities in promoting healthy lifestyles and integrated care systems was stressed, as was the importance of identifying long-term care needs early on and of preventing disease, frailty and dementia.

54 Violence against women, in particular those in marginalized situations and experiencing intersecting forms of discrimination, had to be addressed. The round table on ensuring equal access to and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities, held during the sixteenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, was recognized as a landmark event, particularly given the increased risk of forced abortion and sterilization faced by women and girls with disabilities.

55 Several representatives shared information on efforts made to eliminate harmful practices such as child marriage, including legal measures that increased the age of marriage and viewed child marriage as a form of sexual violence. They also reported on measures taken in the areas of skills development and entrepreneurship and the use of cash incentives. One representative noted that the introduction of legislation and increased access to reproductive health education and economic opportunities for women had contributed to a decline in child marriage.

56 Several representatives stressed the impact that climate change was having on health systems, threatening health and livelihoods. While health systems in general had to be strengthened

and made more resilient to climate change, a particular emphasis should be placed on reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent services. In addition, there was a need for more disaggregated data on how vulnerable populations were being affected by climate-induced disasters and to engage women and girls in actions to adapt to and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

57 Several representatives underscored the value of collaboration and peer learning across countries, multilateral institutions and the private sector to promote sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, healthy ageing and the prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases.

58 One representative noted that the documentation for the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference should have been aligned with the terms and definitions in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and he therefore expressed his objection to the use of the words "sexual orientation", "gender identity" and "intersectional approach" in any part of the report on the Seventh Conference.

59 Civil society representatives highlighted the importance of community-based solutions and the need to look beyond the reproductive role of women by taking a holistic approach to realizing women's rights and meeting their needs. Participants in the civil society and youth forums held on 13 and 14 November called upon Governments to ensure universal access to high-quality contraceptives and to sexual and reproductive health services free from stigma and discrimination, to decriminalize abortion and to amend laws and policies that restricted the right to safe abortion.

Inequalities and social exclusion, and rights (agenda item 3 (c))

60 The Conference heard a panel discussion that was moderated by the Regional Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Asia-Pacific Regional Office. The panellists were: Head of Strategy Management, Employees Provident Fund, Malaysia, Ms. Balqais Yusoff; Member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Ms. Bandana Rana; former Judge of the High Court of Australia, Mr. Michael Kirby; and Programme Coordinator, Asia-Pacific Mission for Migrants, Mr. Rey Asis.

61 The panellists highlighted the progress that had been made in addressing inequalities, including through policymaking. They focused on the social exclusion faced by certain groups, including women and girls in vulnerable situations, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants and sexual minorities. Progress had been made in curbing violence and harmful practices against women and girls, as well as against sexual minorities, including by affirming legal rights.

62 Efforts to address inequalities were, however, being hampered by certain legal restrictions, harmful social norms, economic challenges, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict and climate change. The COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted social inequalities and the role of social protection in addressing them, in particular in ageing societies.

63 The panellists recommended that all stakeholders with broad coalitions become engaged in promoting change in legal frameworks in order to reduce inequalities and end social exclusion. Enacting anti-discrimination legislation was considered essential. Universal social protection, including for migrant workers, covering different stages of the life cycle was highlighted as helpful for addressing inequalities and social exclusion. A shift to universal social protection was recommended, in particular in the light of demographic and social challenges and as experience with targeted programmes had demonstrated that several groups had been left out.

64 Representatives of the following member States made statements: Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Solomon Islands (on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States and territories), Sri Lanka and United States.

65 Representatives of the following civil society organizations and other entities made statements: Blue Diamond Society, United Nations Youth Advisory Panel Mongolia and Youth Interfaith Forum on Sexuality Indonesia.

66 Several representatives highlighted that ending social exclusion was crucial for achieving sustainable development and that more needed to be done through legislation, policies and practices. The adverse social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including in terms of exacerbating inequalities, as well as issues of social justice and inclusive development, required a comprehensive and sustained effort involving Governments, civil society organizations and international and regional partners.

67 The Conference stressed the importance of social protection in addressing inequalities and noted the achievements that had been made in implementing social protection schemes, including schemes to promote gender-responsive budgeting and tracking and social protection programmes tailored to vulnerable groups. Progress had also been made in terms of national old-age insurance, basic or social pension programmes and disability and single-parent allowances, as well as in empowering older persons at the community level.

68 Several representatives stressed that providing inclusive and universal health-care services, including for marginalized groups, was crucial for improving maternal and child health and access to sexual and reproductive health services.

69 Several representatives acknowledged that, despite the efforts made, inequalities and social exclusion persisted and manifested themselves in uneven access to education, digital technology and health-care services and in poverty. People in vulnerable situations, in particular women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons, faced barriers and discrimination in accessing public services and were subject to violence and abuse. Several representatives noted that the intersecting factors of age, gender and disability status, among others, contributed to making some people more vulnerable and called for the adoption of multifaceted approaches to address those factors, including by extending social protection.

70 Some representatives recognized that, while women played a vital role in the economic, political, social, cultural and environmental spheres, they still experienced gender-based discrimination and faced violence and other gender-related pressures. Representatives reported on efforts made to support and protect women from violence by developing laws and regulations, providing integrated support and assistance and facilitating access to social services and bank accounts. Governments were urged to pass laws to end child marriage, which was identified as a root cause of gender disparities.

71 Some representatives reported on improvements in their countries' education systems and on school feeding programmes, which had led to improved nutrition and better education outcomes. One representative reported on the school enrolment of refugees and undocumented children.

72 Several representatives reported on the development of programmes to assist marginalized populations such as migrants, the urban poor, persons with disabilities, transgender persons, populations particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, populations living in rural and remote areas and Indigenous peoples. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many migrant workers did not have access to social protection. Two representatives stressed the importance of promoting inclusion and protecting the rights of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities and sexual minorities.

73 While noting that some progress had been achieved, several representatives recommended strengthening national data collection and statistical systems at all levels of government in order to provide reliable, disaggregated and internationally comparable statistics. They also recommended strengthening regional cooperation to harmonize the collection and analysis of population and development data for evidence-based policymaking. The importance of collecting disaggregated data on vulnerable groups, including data on disability status, was noted.

74 Some representatives expressed support for Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) projects on population ageing, women's empowerment, unpaid care work and persons with disabilities.

75 One representative called for countries' chosen development paths to be respected and safeguarded, for strengthened cooperation and

multilateralism that promoted the exchange of talent, finance and technology and for the United Nations to play a greater role, including through regional cooperation platforms such as that provided by ESCAP.

76 Representatives of civil society stressed that gender-based violence continued not to be addressed adequately and spoke of the detrimental impacts of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Harmful social norms had to be eradicated and progressive policy reforms and anti-discriminatory legislation needed to be introduced.

Partnerships and regional cooperation (agenda item 3 (d))

77 The Conference heard a panel discussion that was moderated by the Director of the ESCAP Social Development Division. The panellists were: Senior Adviser for Advocacy and Engagement of the International Development Association, Ms. Dorodi Sharma; Senior Research Fellow at the China Population and Development Research Center, Ms. Mengjun Tang; Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Honduras to the United Nations and Chair of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development, Ms. Noemí Ruth Espinoza Madrid; and Deputy Executive Director of the National Statistics Office of Georgia, Mr. Paata Shavishvili.

78 The panellists noted that demographic dynamics, including population ageing and urbanization, as well as issues around sexual and reproductive health, required putting people at the centre of development. Political will, partnerships across sectors and the engagement of stakeholders, including Governments, civil society organizations and academic institutions, were crucial for ensuring the well-being of all people.

79 Technical cooperation, for example in terms of capacity-building and international cooperation, could be aimed at making progress in data collection and analysis, including through the use of technology. Better data could, in turn, provide valuable input for the formulation of people-centred population policies. While progress had been made, several challenges remained. For example, there were gaps, including with regard to disaggregation by gender and disability, and insufficient data on infrastructure, health (notably on maternal and child health for health system planning), educational outcomes and human capital development. Data limitations hindered progress, weakened both decision-making processes and the associated outcomes and resulted in inadequate capacities to prepare for the impacts of climate change and plan for greater sustainability.

80 The panellists recommended that regional cooperation be promoted to support the harmonization of statistical methodologies, facilitate the comparability of data between countries and enhance the exchange of good practices. In particular, more needed to be done to strengthen the collection of data on persons with disabilities, who were among the most marginalized. They also recommended that Governments adopt more holistic population agendas, making use of bilateral or multilateral platforms and ensuring the inclusion of diverse stakeholders. Intergenerational solidarity and demographic foresight were going to be crucial as the region prepared for the Summit of the Future, to be held in New York on 22 and 23 September 2024.

81 Representatives of the following member States made statements: Bangladesh, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and United States. The representative of the Cook Islands also made a statement (on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States and territories).

82 Representatives of the following civil society organizations and other entities made statements: Asian Population Association, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, SPEAK Trust, United Nations Youth Advisory Panel Mongolia and Women's Rehabilitation Centre.

83 Several representatives noted that partnerships and regional cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation, were essential for learning lessons and sharing knowledge on population and development challenges, including climate change, and expressed their commitment to engaging with civil society on development initiatives. The following were identified as key challenges: human resources development; population ageing and the increase in associated care

needs; trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation and forced labour; gender-based violence and child marriage; universal health coverage and sexual and reproductive health and rights; and climate change and natural disasters, as well as the forced displacement caused by such phenomena.

84 Many representatives noted that initiatives and good practices had been implemented to address population and development issues and that collaboration with development partners, financial support and technical cooperation had been crucial elements of all those efforts.

85 Some representatives underscored the particular benefits of subregional groupings, strategies and frameworks for addressing challenges and finding solutions. These included the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, the 2015 Yanuca Island Declaration on health in Pacific small island developing States and territories, the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, the Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Ageing: Empowering Older Persons in ASEAN and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia.

86 Several representatives called upon the global community to strengthen dialogue on climate change and to commit to taking action for the planet, for a shared future and for the generations to come. In that regard, regional cooperation and collaborative partnerships among nations were needed to develop a unified and effective global response, including by adopting inclusive, innovative and sustainable approaches, sharing research findings and bringing together diverse perspectives and areas of expertise.

87 Civil society representatives too underscored the need to promote partnerships and collaboration, which were essential for addressing conflicts and climate-related crises; promoting inclusion and access to health services, in particular as humanitarian needs increased; and focusing more on vulnerable populations, including migrants, many of whom lacked access to sexual and reproductive health services and HIV services and faced discrimination with regard to both labour and health rights in sending and receiving countries. Furthermore, civil society representatives called upon Governments to abolish discriminatory health policies and to foster regional cooperation with a view to stopping the criminalization of and attacks on women human rights defenders, including those working on gender, sexuality, comprehensive sexuality education and the right to work. Noting the role of women as caregivers for older persons and other family members, civil society representatives recommended that flexible working hours and integrated approaches that aimed to ensure a good standard of living and to protect human dignity be given greater attention.

C Other matters (agenda item 4)

88 Prior to the adoption of the report, a representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran delivered an explanation of position.[1]

D Adoption of the report on the Conference (agenda number 5)

89 The report on the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference was adopted on 17 November 2023.

1 The full text of the statement is available from www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/IR_7APPC_Item4.pdf.



www.unescap.org/kp/2023/asia-pacific-population-and-development-report-2023