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**Statement by
Ms. Keiko Osaki
Chief, Population and Social Integration Section
Emerging Social Issues Division
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

at

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Agenda Item 5: Programme implementation and the future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), I would like to express my deep appreciation to you for giving me the opportunity to briefly describe the various activities we have undertaken during the year elapsed in the area of population.

A number of activities carried out by ESCAP in the past year planned a focus on population ageing and its social and economic implications in Asia and the Pacific region. Five years after the adoption of the landmark Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, several meetings were held to review developments made in the region in addressing the graying of populations. ESCAP organized, among others, the Expert Group Meeting on the Regional Preparations for the Global Review of Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in March 2007. The Meeting focused on well-being into old age and enabling environments for older persons; two of the three priority directions laid down by MIPAA.

Ahead of the global five-year review on the implementation of MIPAA, the Asian and Pacific region, led by ESCAP, was the first to organize a review meeting on the progress achieved in countries and areas of the region towards the goal of building a "Society for All Ages". The above-cited High-level Meeting on the Regional Review of the MIPAA was held

/in Macao, China

in Macao, China from 9 to 11 October 2007. The ministerial-level meeting addressed progress towards meeting the commitments of MIPAA and adopted the Macao Outcome Document, which is a set of recommendations for action providing a coherent and concrete way forward on ageing matters for the Asian and Pacific region.

Further on population ageing, another meeting, convened in July 2007 called urgent attention to some of the many implications of the phenomenon. Organized in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Seminar on the Social, Health and Economic Consequences of Population Ageing in the Context of Changing Families provided a comprehensive overview of the causes and socio-economic and health consequences of ageing, focusing on changing families which traditionally have supported and cared for their elders. Bringing together experts on population ageing and family and government representatives from 12 countries in Asia, the Seminar examined the existing programmes and policies to improve the quality of life of older persons and adopted recommendations on ways to further strengthen national programme design and implementation in the region.

Distinguished Delegates,

As you may be aware, ESCAP and UNFPA have had a long and fruitful collaboration, spanning several decades and dating back to the Fund's inception in 1969. For many years, the activities of ESCAP in the field of population were largely supported by UNFPA. Over the past few years, the two organizations have been playing an active role in creating an enabling environment for the development and implementation of policies, including population policies that contribute to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

The recently concluded project on Population, Development and Poverty: Emerging Challenges (2004-2007) aimed at contributing to more effective national and sectoral development plans that incorporate emerging population issues in ways that reduce poverty, improve reproductive health and empower women and older persons in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

Activities implemented under the project addressed issues such as mortality, fertility, population ageing and international migration, in response to a number of recommendations contained in the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (Bangkok, 2002), in particular those recommendations dealing with international migration, gender, capacity-building, improving data collection, knowledge sharing and strengthening partnerships. It also helped bring out the linkages between the Millennium Development Goals and the ICPD Programme of Action, specifically those related to health.

During the last year of the project's implementation, ESCAP organized the Training Workshop on Population, Development and Poverty in the Pacific in end September 2007 in

/Suva, Fiji.

Suva, Fiji. Organized in collaboration with UNFPA Suva, the Workshop contributed to enhance the capacity of national planners and policy makers in integrating population factors in development planning. It helped elucidate the complex relationship between population, development and poverty, demonstrating the “population effect” on economic and social development in the sub-region. Topics addressed included linkages of population-related variables (fertility, mortality and migration) with development and poverty; prospects of achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Pacific; reproductive health and development; and gender and development. Moreover, the Training Workshop offered fundamental concepts in demographic projections. It drew 12 participants from various Pacific island countries, namely Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The Pacific sub-region was the centre of attention of another activity implemented under the same project; the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* and its December 2007 issue, which focused exclusively on the population situation in this remote sub-region. Prepared in collaboration with UNFPA Technical Services Team (CST) in Suva, this special issue of our renown APPJ zoomed into some of the population challenges confronting this part of the world; including HIV/AIDS, already a generalized epidemic in Papua New Guinea; sexual and reproductive health; mortality differentials; and the issue of availability, accessibility and utilization of demographic data, ahead of the 2010 round of population censuses.

Two other issues of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* were issued and disseminated last year, including another thematic one on Fertility Transition in Asia, which emphasized the reasons behind the demographic transition which has impacted virtually all countries in the subregion and underscored the policy responses needed in tackling the challenges emerging from the unprecedented social change.

Further activities related to information dissemination and knowledge sharing for population advocacy and policy support included the publication of the widely used *ESCAP 2007 Population Datasheet*, including in a highly user-friendly web-based format, as well as the continuous publication of *Population Headliners*. A precious and respected source of information for a large audience of population practitioners in over 100 countries, the bimonthly newsletter captured, in six different issues, important population-related events and activities taking place in the Asian and Pacific region, sustaining awareness of the importance of population factors for sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The web-based electronic versions of our publications attracted ever more interest and attention, with remarkable web traffic statistics on both the publications websites and the preparation and dissemination of the 20th anniversary, feature-rich CD-ROM of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*.

Distinguished Delegates,

Finally, turning to the issue of international migration, I would like to inform you that ESCAP, among other activities in this field, is taking a lead in preparing a situation analysis for the region -- one of the salient activities of the Regional Thematic Working Group on International Migration, including Human Trafficking that ESCAP and IOM are co-chairing.

/The Group

The Group has conducted research on the situation of international migration in East and South-East Asia and plans to publish it as a report, with a view to making available to policy makers and practitioners comprehensive reference material and policy recommendations. The publication will provide an overview of the multidimensional aspects of international migration, thereby indicating the scope and status of knowledge on the issue and covering cross-cutting themes such as gender, health and regional cooperation. The report is expected to be released in the coming few months.

Another upcoming publication in the field of international migration, is a study on the social implications of international migration, highlighting the increasing scale of female migration and migration of highly skilled professionals in the region and addressing critical issues such as the protection of the rights of migrants and the provision of access to basic social services. The study will be published as an issue of the *Asia-Pacific Population and Social Studies* series in the coming months.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.