

For immediate release

## Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference to Set Population Agenda for Building Better Lives

BANGKOK (UNESCAP), 16 September 2013 - More than 400 delegates, including one Head of State, Ministers, policy makers and civil society representatives from 47 countries are in Bangkok this week to attend the [Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference](#) (APPC).

They will review population and development challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region, including the unprecedented pace of population ageing, migration, and urbanization and changing household and family structures.

The Conference will also tackle a range of issues critical to human rights and development, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, HIV and AIDS, gender-based violence, and the rights of young people.

In the Asia-Pacific region, too many women still die as a result of childbirth. Lack of information on sexual and reproductive health, and limited access to related services, is contributing to unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions. These gaps also expose millions to the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted disease.

The five-day Conference is expected to arrive at fresh solutions to address these population and development challenges. Organized by the [United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific \(ESCAP\)](#) in cooperation with UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, the Conference will be instrumental in shaping the regional population agenda for the next decade.

The Conference is expected to adopt a Ministerial Declaration that will also serve as the Asia-Pacific regional input to the global 20-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The United Nations General Assembly will convene a special session next year to recommit and advance the ICPD Programme of Action - the first United Nations framework to recognize reproductive rights and gender equality as essential to sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The Minister of Public Health of the Royal Thai Government, H.E. Mr. Pradit Sintavanarong, opened the Conference today stating: "At present, Thailand is facing major challenges from the consequences of its rapid demographic transition which includes rapid population ageing with a rising tendency ratio and declining working age population. This will dramatically impact the country's development which requires greater attention and action to adapt to these consequences and sustain the momentum of development progress."

[Speaking at the opening, UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin](#) cited a regional survey on progress since the ICPD conducted by ESCAP in cooperation with UNFPA. He said it shows that Asia-Pacific countries have made important gains but need to do more to reduce economic inequality, ensure access to contraception, prevent maternal deaths and HIV infections, respond to the rights and needs of young people and end violence against women and girls.

"Successfully addressing this unfinished agenda is not only the right thing to do but also smart economics," he declared.

Mr. Shun-ichi Murata, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP, noted that the Golden Jubilee anniversary of the Asian and Pacific Population Conference provides a unique opportunity to forge consensus on a new regional pathway to address the persistent and emerging challenges of population and development at a time when the region is undergoing dramatic transformation. At the same time, it is also an opportunity to provide a strong Asia-Pacific regional input for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, as well as the post-2015 development agenda.

An inclusive preparatory process—including a Civil Society Organization Forum and a Youth Forum held in Bangkok last week - has ensured that voices from all sectors of society - Government, civil society and parliamentarians will shape the Conference's vision for the future.

At the close of the Conference on 20 September, Ministers from 46 countries are expected to recommit to redouble their efforts to advance the population and development agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

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*UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that is delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.*

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