

Special Remarks by Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) at TICAD7 official side event “Towards Population Ageing in Africa-Current Approach to Elderly Care, and Lessons to be Shared Across Continents” August 29, 2019, At Pacifico Yokohama

Mr. Akio Okawara, President and CEO of the Japan Center for International Exchange, Ms. Reiko Hayashi, the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, my dear sister Minister Awa Marie Coll-Seck, Excellencies, Distinguished speakers, Guests and Partners, good afternoon. At the outset, I would like to express our gratitude from UNFPA to the government of Japan for your leadership in bringing us together under the TICAD umbrella, and also for highlighting the very important issue of population ageing. There are some brilliant initiatives taking place around the world that focus on healthy dignified happy ageing, and I would say that the Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AHWIN) is one such brilliant platform. It is facilitating regional cooperation in population ageing and I am really happy to learn that an African Health and Well Being Initiative is being spearheaded using some of that same blueprint.

Population ageing is actually no longer just a phenomenon in developed countries. Planning ahead means that we have to think about the current youth boom in developing nations which will very quickly progress through the cycle of life and indeed in Africa. We estimate that by the year 2050 around 80% of people who are aged 60 or older will be living in what are now low-or middle-income countries. So the face of the world is changing. And ageing is not only driven by falling fertility rates, what we have, and this is great news is medical advances, health and nutrition improvements that are leading to longer lifespan, and the outcome of these great achievements has to be part and parcel of a discussion of social and economic development so that as we age, the quality of life also is maintained around the globe. More and more governments are looking for advice and support from UNFPA on policies and on programmes to address population ageing and low fertility. And we are working with partners and demonstrating leadership by increasing support for demographic intelligence and policy advice. Next year, census 2020 a very important year for this. Looking across the life cycle what UNFPA also says is that part of our mandate is to make sure that every young person’s potential is fulfilled. That’s part of being able to contribute to your family, to your community, to your nation so that by the time the life cycle brings you to older age you will have had an investment in you so that you are prepared for that stage of life.

Just to close, I would like to say that in this year UNFPA is celebrating our 50th anniversary, so we are on the ageing spectrum, and indeed we are celebrating 25 years since the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, and it was there that all the member states, 179 of them called for action. Action that is vital for a country’s prospect, for prosperity and transforming the way we look at population from just looking at numbers and statistics to seeing the faces of the people that are represented. And as we convene in Nairobi on the 12 to the 14th November to celebrate 25 years since Cairo, we are asking people to come with commitments, and population ageing is one of the emerging issues that we will be discussing under the umbrella of demographic diversity. It is been said that ageing is not lost youth, what it is, it’s an opportunity to expand creativity and it’s an opportunity to show our strength as advocates in this stage of life. So together let us make a difference, let us project meaningful responses to population ageing including some of the pension strategizing that is happening in Japan at this very moment here. Let us learn from each other and let us advance the vision of health and happiness in the golden years of life. Thank you so much.