Mr. President,

1. Since this is the first time that I am taking the floor, allow me to congratulate you on your appointment as the President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA and UNOPS.

2. I would like to thank Mr. Xu for his presentation on the Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific 2014-2017. The Regional Programme has been a result of extensive consultations; its emphasis on eradication of poverty, inclusive economic growth, empowerment of women and sustainable development resonate well with Bhutan's own national development goals and objectives. We are, therefore, pleased to welcome the Regional Programme.

3. While not wishing to minimize the role or contribution of other UN Funds, Programs and Specialised Agencies, the reality is that in much of Bhutan, UNDP is equated with the face of United Nations and indeed of the entire international community. UNDP's country presence and activities in the field are therefore of tremendous importance for a small, landlocked, developing country like Bhutan. We look forward to and in fact, count on the continuation of this partnership.

Mr. President,

4. The Regional Programme for the Asia and Pacific 2014-2017 coincides with Bhutan's 11th Five Year Plan from 2013 till 2018 that has "Self-reliance and Inclusive Green Socio-Economic Development" as the main objectives.

5. In the last fifty years of planned development, we have made good socio-economic progress. In this journey, the UNDP has been a long-standing partner, supporting Bhutan right from the start of planned development. Bhutan greatly values its relations with UNDP and remains appreciative of the cooperation and collaboration that UNDP has extended to Bhutan, which has been underpinned by the spirit of close partnership and understanding of ground realities. This continues to be a significant aspect of the Common Country Programme Document and Bhutan One Programme for 2014-2018, which are fully aligned with Bhutan's broader development goals and objectives of the 11th Five Year Plan.
6. The details of the 11th Five-Year Plan were discussed with Bhutan’s development partners at the 12th Round Table Meeting convened by Bhutan from 11-12 Dec 2013 in Thimphu, co chaired by Foreign Minister Rinzin Dorje and ASG Haoliaing Xu, Regional Director RBAP. The meeting took stock of the significant achievements in the area of socio-economic development, as well as priorities, needs and challenges of Bhutan. Development partners reaffirmed their political support for the 11th Five Year Plan and committed new and additional resources for its implementation. In this regard, I would like to convey, the Royal Government’s appreciation to UNDP and in particular, its Regional Bureau for the Asia Pacific region and the Country Team in Thimphu, for the support and collaboration that contributed to the successful conduct and outcome of the 12th Round Table Meeting.

7. The discussions, also referred, among others, to the issue of eventual graduation from the LDC category, which is an objective of the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs. As a LDC, allow me to affirm here on behalf of my Government that Bhutan considers the prospect of graduation as a cherished national objective, indeed what should be a source of shared pride between the state concerned and its development partners as a demonstration of successful partnership. However, in keeping with the IPOA, LDCs must be able to graduate on a sure footing and in a sustainable manner avoiding risk of any backtracking on hard-earned development gains. Matters related to timeframe and transition requires very careful and deliberate consideration, a responsibility that rests squarely on the shoulders of the country concerned. In this context, the UN systems’ readiness to support and facilitate Bhutan’s eventual preparations for graduation and smooth transition are deeply valued and will remain of utmost importance.

8. In conclusion, let me say that as we move forward in consolidating our development achievements and further improving the lives of our people, we will continue to rely on the continued support and cooperation of UNDP.