Philippine Country Statement  
Delivered by  
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Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Mister President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Good morning/afternoon.

Allow us to extend our sincerest gratitude to the UNESCAP for providing this platform to share the Philippines’ efforts towards empowering people and ensuring social inclusiveness and equality.

Given the colossal scale of the SDGs, the resources needed to achieve Agenda 2030 should be simultaneously
efficient, effective, and equitable. The massive resource requirements to meet these ambitious agenda requires inclusion and engagement of all stakeholders, and we acknowledge that meeting our development commitments requires nothing short of a whole-of-society approach and determination. This is why, in crafting the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022, the government’s blueprint for development, we consulted not only government agencies, but also members of the academe, non-government organizations, the private sector, and civil society across our country’s different regions. We also posted the draft Plan online to make it possible for the wider public to give their comments.

In line with the theme of this year’s Session, allow us to highlight some of our achievements in relation to Goals 4, 8, and 10 of the SDGs, particularly those promoting inclusivity and equality.

On Goal no. 4, our country’s Conditional Cash Transfer program, which primarily intends to enable the poor to
actively participate in the education system, addresses constraints on education and health care access. On the supply side, both private and non-government organizations are tapped to provide alternative modes of education through the Alternative Learning System. Moreover, we are leveraging science, technology, and innovation and the recently legislated policies promoting open distance learning systems to ensure inclusive education. The continued implementation of free tuition up to the tertiary level supports the long view of equalizing opportunities.

On Goal no. 8, decent work and economic growth, quality of work in our country has improved through the years; however, we still see low and continuously declining labor participation of women. We hope that the recently passed Expanded Maternity Leave Act extending maternity leave benefits from 60 to 105 days reverses this trend besides contributing to alleviating what we call the *motherhood penalty*. We are counting on the private sector to implement
non-discrimination laws such as this, and in ensuring that women receive equal opportunities in the workplace.

Further, to promote labor force participation, we need to drastically lower the unmet need for family planning. The full implementation of the country’s Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law is crucial in reducing inequality by improving women’s labor force participation and allowing households to better manage their finite resources.

Inclusive development requires inclusive and sustainable business practices. As such, several businesses are ramping up efforts in making economic growth reach vulnerable sectors. From one-off charitable acts, businesses are now actively seeking opportunities for the poor and the marginalized to participate in the production value chain. The recently issued Sustainability Reporting Guidelines for Publicly Listed Companies have contributed to enable these private sector initiatives by reporting good practices in promoting social, environmental, and economic
sustainability by businesses. The passage of the Green Jobs Act supports the creation of green jobs and the provision of incentives to business enterprises that use green technologies. Consistent with inclusive employment practices, the Ease of Doing Business Act, the Community Empowerment through Science and Technology, OneStop Lab, and One Expert programs were implemented to help local communities and micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises to find gainful employment.

Meanwhile, on Goal no. 10, we experienced a steep decline in poverty incidence among Filipinos, which decreased to 21 percent in the first half of 2018 from 27.6 percent in the first half of 2015. While this decrease of 6.6 percentage points is commendable, we do not want to ignore the stark disparities in poverty among regions in the Philippines. To address this, we designed a National Spatial Strategy to tackle spatial and socioeconomic inequalities by linking lagging regions with leading ones. We believe that improved regional transport infrastructure will create opportunities for production, employment, and livelihood in
regions outside of our national capital, Metro Manila and a few other urban centers. Improving regional connectivity requires channeling domestic public and private resources as well as international funds to these infrastructure projects. This highlights the need to engage the whole of society, not just government, in ensuring equitable growth.

As the Philippine experience has shown, partnerships are a vital, nay fundamental, factor in meeting the SDGs. Colleagues, at this 75th Session of the UNESCAP, we have yet another opportunity to engage and learn from each other’s experiences. We hope that the partnerships formed or strengthened at this Conference will always have that orientation of taking us a step closer to real inclusive growth and truly leaving no one behind.

Thank you.

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