

**PHILIPPINE COUNTRY STATEMENT**  
**5<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**Bangkok, Thailand**  
**28-30 November 2018**

Mister/Madame Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are honoured to be here today for the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Social Development to once again take part in intergovernmental discussions on key social development issues in Asia and the Pacific, particularly on strengthening social protection and leaving no one behind towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals or the SDGs. These matters are among the Philippine government's priorities; hence, we commit to actively participate and contribute to the attainment of the objectives of this Session.

Mister/Madame Chairperson,

While the Philippines is now on a path of consistently strong economic growth, it is critical that we ensure that all Filipinos, particularly the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and women and girls, take part and benefit from this development. It is in this regard that inclusive growth through human capital development and reduction of vulnerability of individuals are among the goals laid out in our government's Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022, which is geared towards the attainment of the SDGs and our peoples' long-term vision—we call "Our Ambition 2040."

Mister/Madame Chairperson,

The Philippines acknowledges that boosting its investments on social protection is necessary to achieve high impacts on reducing poverty, which, as of 2015, stands at 21.6 percent of the population. Based on data from the Decent Work Country Diagnostics, the ratio of total government spending in social protection to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was recorded at 6.12 percent in 2015. Meanwhile, the ratio of total government spending in SP to the national budget was recorded at 31.23 percent. This allocation of one-third of the government's national budget express the Philippines full commitment to address the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and end poverty through various social protection mechanisms. We also recognize the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector in this endeavour.

A major social protection measure in the country is the implementation of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) which we are continually strengthening along with other programs such as the Unconditional Cash Transfer (UCT), the Presidential directive to provide rice subsidy to poor households, and the Sustainable Livelihood Program, among others.

To further ensure that no one will be left behind, we are also implementing the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer which caters to homeless street families, indigenous people families and vulnerable families who are in need of special protection.

We are pleased to inform that just yesterday, the Bicameral Conference Committee of Congress has approved the consolidated version of the Universal Health Care bill. The bill was certified as urgent by the President and is expected to be signed into law anytime now. The bill seeks to guarantee equal access to quality and affordable health services. It mandates the automatic enrollment of all Filipinos under the National Health Insurance Program and improvement in public health facilities for better health service delivery.

Mister/Madame Chairperson,

In line with Goal 5 of the SDGs, the Philippines has made significant strides in advancing women empowerment and gender equality. This is evident in the sustained inclusion of the country in the top ten of the annual World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index. The country is almost equal to gender parity in education (and even more favorable to girls), legal rights of women for economic participation, working poor, and gender pay gap. But gender constraints still persist despite the gains that have been achieved in the recent years, particularly in terms of political empowerment, economic participation, and economic opportunities for women.

Cognizant of these gaps and committed to sustain previous gains, the Philippines has pursued gender mainstreaming strategies, including policy and program development processes. Gender-responsive labor laws that we have recently enacted are geared toward promoting and protecting the rights of domestic workers and workers in the informal economy; lifting the night work prohibition for women; and prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age.

We are also pleased to share that our Congress has ratified the Expanded Maternity Bill, and is now just awaiting the President's signature for it to become a law. With this landmark legislation, maternity leave will be extended from 60 days to 105 days.

Our Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) is also in the process of finalizing the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Framework Plan 2019-2025 which contains strategies for the various facets of gender equality, including expanded economic opportunity for women.

Mister/Madame Chairperson,

Mitigating risks faced by vulnerable groups is among the key strategies in the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022. These include: implementing a convergence approach to help the poor and vulnerable become self-sufficient and self-reliant; implementing a multi-sectoral roadmap for children; ensuring a disability-inclusive society; strengthening employment facilitation; intensifying social protection programs for Overseas Filipinos and their families; improving the social pension system; and, expanding the social health insurance system, among others.

We are continually exerting efforts to address the concerns of persons with disability, uphold their rights, and enhance their wellbeing, as led by our National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA). Towards this end, the Philippines has instituted policies and programs to promote the rights and privileges of persons with disability as well as prohibit any form of discrimination against the members of the sector; provide discount privileges to specific goods and services; enhance their mobility and social participation; enhance their social, and vocational skills and

capabilities; and, the establishment of an institutional mechanism to ensure that their concerns are considered in development initiatives and that disability-related programs and services are implemented in provinces, cities and municipalities, among others.

To address the lack of disability-related data, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) conducted the National Disability Prevalence Survey/Model Functioning Survey 2016 and the Department of Health works with different stakeholders to enhance the Philippine Registry for Persons with Disabilities.

Recognizing that older persons are among the most vulnerable in the society, elderly Filipinos aged 60 and above are entitled to a 20 percent discount and exempted from the value-added tax (VAT) on applicable goods and services for their exclusive use. We also passed a law on mandatory social health insurance coverage for senior citizens and implemented a program providing social pension coverage for indigent senior citizens.

Mister/Madame Chairperson,

We have more than 10 million Filipinos abroad who contribute to the national economy through remittances. To ensure their protection and promote their rights, we have set in place a number of governance initiatives. We recently revised our Magna Carta for Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos, to strengthen measures in deployment and reintegration of Filipinos overseas. We maintain labor and consular offices to make welfare and legal services immediately available to them. We continue to build international partnerships so that the rights of not only overseas Filipinos but also of all migrants worldwide, are protected and promoted. This resolve is demonstrated in our strong involvement in negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Finally, Mister/Madame Chairperson,

We continue to face challenges but we are optimistic that we can overcome all obstacles through strong international cooperation and partnerships, implementation of appropriate country policies and programs, and firm resolve to leave no one behind.

Thank you very much.