

Distinguished Chairperson,
Delegates to the 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women,

Thank you Mr. Chairperson for giving the floor to the Philippines. My delegation congratulates you and the other officers of the CSW on your well deserved election. It assures you of its full support and cooperation to ensure a successful conclusion of this session.

Fifteen years have passed and here we are again, joined together by our commitment to uphold women's rights and promote women's welfare, equality, participation and empowerment. We are gathered here today to celebrate the gains we have achieved and renew our commitment to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women that continue to exist.

The Philippines stands proud of its gains. It recently enacted into law **The Magna Carta of Women**. This highlights the Philippines 15 years of dedicated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session. This comprehensive women's human rights legislation is the national translation into law of the CEDAW, and enshrines the rights-based approach and guarantees access to effective remedies with the Philippines Commission on Human Rights acting as gender ombudsman.

The Philippines has made progress to eradicate violence against women by enacting laws to combat sexual harassment, rape, trafficking in persons, and domestic violence with the coordinated efforts of government and NGOs. Inter-agency councils against trafficking in persons and against violence against women ensure that the landmark laws are effectively implemented. Performance standards and assessment tools on gender-responsive handling of women victims have been developed for the police, prosecutors, social workers, health workers and village officials. Thus, the number of VAW cases reported to the police increased six-fold from 1,100 cases in 1996 to over 9,132 in 2001.

Seven years into the implementation of the anti-trafficking in persons law has resulted in 287 persons rescued by the police and 709 persons arrested. In 2008, the social welfare department has provided protection and assistance to 632 women and children. Although 160 cases had been received for prosecution by the justice department, only 13 convictions have been made. The Department of Foreign Affairs has assisted and repatriated 315 cases of human trafficking.

In education, female enrolment in traditionally male-dominated disciplines such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, veterinary medicine, math, computer science and military has steadily increased. Women scholars outnumber men. Data on scholarship assistance of education department to deserving indigenous youths for all school levels shows that 50.7 % of over 49.2% beneficiaries are females.

In the labor sector, however, female labor force participation rate registered only at 50 % while the males registered steadily at 80% over the past ten years.

The Philippine government has targeted the generation of six to ten million jobs until 2010. Three million of these are for women being provided access to micro-finance and microenterprise development. The Gender-Responsive Actions for the Transformation of Women or the GREAT Women Project being spearheaded by the national machinery has made inroads to unblock some of the social constraints to women's economic empowerment.

To help protect the country's most vulnerable sectors from threats and consequences of the global economic crisis, the government provides emergency employment and funding and supervising livelihood project through the Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP).

Environment issues now call our urgent attention. The Philippines has just signed into law the Climate Change Act of 2009, wherein the national women's machinery is one of the members of the advisory body to ensure gender mainstreaming in the issue of climate change.

There is better coordination among national agencies to produce sex-disaggregated data on 20 priority indicators to monitor progress in the implementation of CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action, and the MDGs and the national plan for women.

Programs and projects implemented by government instrumentalities are monitored by our supreme audit institution to ensure that the implementation of their gender and development (GAD) plans and the utilization of their gender budget contribute to closing the gender gaps in the country. A total of 8.14 billion pesos have been spent for GAD projects for the past five years.

A Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines were formulated to ensure the integration of GAD in the design and implementation of ODA-funded projects. The ODA projects show increasing and promising trend in achieving a more gender-responsive ODA. Over the 3-year period, 37 % of the ODA allocation went to gender-responsive projects in 2009 as compared to 23% in 2008 at the project implementation stage.

On civil and political rights, women comprise 58.7 percent of the entire bureaucracy as of 2004. In 2007, women occupying 2nd level position is at 78 percent. In 2010, 42.4 percent occupies 3rd level positions. Women account for only 20 percent of the total position in the judiciary.

The indicator on maternal health is disturbing. The target reduction in Maternal Mortality Rate is 52 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015. The decline has slowed down considerably and appears to have stalled, thus this goal has been identified as the least likely to be achieved for the Philippines. Consistent with the advocacy that all women have the right to safe and quality emergency obstetric services to prevent maternal and newborn death, the health of mothers and children is placed at the center of the Philippines' health reform.

Men in the Philippines are also involved in promoting the reproductive health of women and small groups of men called, 'Mr. GAD' and 'GADFATHERS' highlight this involvement. Another group, called 'MOVE' or Men Opposed to Violence Against Women Everywhere is an organization of men who are committed to be actively involved in the elimination of VAW.

Recognizing the relation of gender-based violence (GBV) to the spread of HIV/AIDS, the Philippines, together with other ASEAN countries, explored the development and passage of policies and legislations, and the formulation and implementation of programs addressing both GBV and HIV/AIDS, and integrating the two while following a gender equality and human rights perspective.

As a signatory to the Millennium Declaration, the Government of the Philippines has adopted the MDGs as a guide for setting national targets. The MDGs are considered benchmarks for tracking the government's performance in achieving international commitments to the global development agenda and particularly the Medium-term Philippine Development Plan goals and targets. The national machinery has been advocating for the integration of gender equality and women's concerns across all the other MDGs and expansion of the list of gender indicators to Goal 3. As a result, the government has paid close attention to responding to the needs and concerns of women and children in the implementation of the MDG in education, poverty eradication, health and gender equality.

At this point, allow me to express my delegation's full support to the UN Secretary-General's proposal for the composite entity, which will be the center of the gender equality architecture in the United Nations system. To further strengthen the entity, my delegation suggests that a significant role in monitoring implementation of UN processes/agreements be given at the country level; and that adequate mechanism for the participation of the civil society should be provided in order to meet the needs of women on the ground. It is hoped that the timeline and process of selection for the Under-Secretary-General that will lead the new entity be made clear.

The Philippines supports the bid of Paris Principles-compliant national human rights institutions to achieve full independent and effective participation status in the session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Gender Equality Architecture Reform.

While we celebrate our milestones in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, we are determined unreservedly to address these remaining challenges: protecting women from adverse impacts of global economic crisis, addressing maternal mortality, mitigating the threat of AIDS epidemic, rationally addressing the reproductive health care needs of women, reducing gap in participation of men and women in decision making, protecting children and women caught in armed conflict, eliminating gender stereotyping and pornography, and promoting gender-responsive disaster risk management.

In closing, our aspirations to develop the fullest potential of girls and women of all ages to ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world for all and enhance their role in the development process must not wane. The movement for gender equality and women empowerment must continue to reap significant advances for our women.

Thank you and good day.