

DRAFT

STATEMENT
to be delivered by
KIRA CHRISTIANNE DANGANAN-AZUCENA
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.

Opening Ceremony on “empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”

3 December 2018; Conference Room 4; 10:00 am

Ensuring the welfare of vulnerable groups, including persons living with a disability, is enshrined in our laws and deeply engrained in the spirit of our race. This is no charity; rather a widespread recognition that our brothers and sisters and our children with disabilities, just like any one of us, are entitled to the equal protection of our laws. And when special legislation was proper to ensure that they get equal rights and opportunities at all times, considering their particular needs, Congress was fast to enact it.

Ten years ago, the Philippines ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Long before that, however, the Philippines had been implementing laws and policies that recognize persons with disabilities as valuable members of society. In 1982, the Philippine Congress passed the Accessibility Law requiring contractors of public buildings, roads, highways, educational institutions, commercial establishments, places of sports and leisure and any private establishment used for public purpose to install facilities and features for the access of persons with disabilities. No building permit may be issued without the ramps, elevators, handrails and other facilities required by the law. These required facilities and features expanded over time to address various types of disability. Accessibility is one of the most important components of an inclusive society.

In 1992, the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities was passed by Congress. (It is notable that this Magna Carta preceded the Magna Carta of Women by 17 years, but that is a story for another time). The Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities mandated the State to exert all efforts to remove all social, cultural, economic, environmental, and attitudinal barriers that are prejudicial to persons with disabilities. This also enshrined the rights and access of persons with disabilities to education, suitable employment, health services, social services, telecommunications, and political and civil rights.

Consistent with our domestic laws and international obligations, we have established special education facilities, provided employment assistance to persons with disabilities and given them access to free health care. Persons with disabilities are also issued a PWD ID card that gives them various privileges, including a legislated discount of 20% off in all public transportation and food establishments.

Pursuant to the policy of empowering persons with disabilities, all government offices are required to set aside at least 1% of its workforce requirement to be filled by persons with disabilities. Local government units are required to establish the Persons with Disability Affairs Office and to involve persons with disabilities in their management, consistent with the principle of “nothing about us, without us”. The approach “gender and development with disability lens” is being utilized to integrate disabilities with gender issues and to implement it in empowerment programs for young women. The last Monday of March every year is Women with Disability Day in the Philippines. It is celebrated with awareness-raising activities to highlight the role of women with disabilities in development.

Guided by the CRPD, as well as by the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities, the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the National Council for Disability Affairs formulated the 2018 Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities which consist of ten goals and targets designed to make Philippine-society barrier-free for persons with disabilities. Taking to heart the commitment to leave no one behind, the Philippine Government pursues partnerships with the private sector as well as international partners to learn about assistive technologies and best practices that could benefit persons with disabilities.

One area that had been a noted challenge for us, and for many others I believe, is the area of data collection and statistics. We affirm that disaggregated and internationally comparable data is critical to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals for, by and with persons with disabilities. There is a need for evidence-based data to inform policy-making and to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind.

The Philippines welcomes the UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development which contains the most comprehensive compilation and

analysis of national policies, programs, best practices, and available statistics regarding the situation of persons with disabilities vis-à-vis the goals of the 2030 Agenda and in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Philippines highly appreciates the efforts of UN DESA and all UN agencies behind this report. It was a privilege to be co-facilitating the resolution that requested this report in the 69th session.

Recognizing that high quality, timely, accessible, reliable and disaggregated data are critical to measuring progress and ensuring that no one is left behind, the resolution co-facilitated by Tanzania and the Philippines this session and co-sponsored by 112 other Member-States requests that data collection and analysis continue with a view to policy making, and subsequently decides to discuss in the 75th session on how best to present this data, including through a flagship report that will follow the one launched today.

I will conclude my statement with the renewed commitment of the Philippines to advance the empowerment, inclusion and equality of persons with disabilities. We do this, not because of our obligations under law and treaty, but because it is the right thing to do. Not only do we not want to leave them behind; we do not want to make the journey without them.

Thank you.