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**STATEMENT  
VICE MINISTER CIRIACO A. LAGUNZAD III  
Department of Labor and Employment  
PHILIPPINES**

**ROUNDTABLE 2: Addressing drivers of migration, particularly large movement,  
and highlighting the positive contribution of migrants  
UN HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS  
19 September 2016,  
UN Headquarters, New York**

Thank you, Mr/ Madame Co-Chairs.

The Philippines congratulates the President of the UN General Assembly for convening this High Level Meeting on Refugees and Migrants in the run up to crafting of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in 2018.

**Conditions that allow people to live in peace and prosperity in their countries of origin so that people can migrate by choice rather than necessity**

In the Philippines, our policy goal is to create an environment that generates enough decent and adequately remunerated work for our citizens. This policy clearly points to the pursuit of economic condition that affords our people the luxury to choose the locus of their employment. It is in this respect that we would like to view migration more of a social development approach to advancing human potentials, than as a compelling economic strategy that seeks livelihood for individuals.

The Philippines, in recent years, has made critical progress towards achieving our goal of improved employment situation drawn from sustained high economic growth rates. Our labor market continues to show vibrancy with declining unemployment and underemployment rates. The July 2016 labor force survey puts our unemployment rate

at historic low of 5.4%, and our underemployment rate at 17.3%. Indeed, our growing economy has created more and better jobs in the country.

Our new president, Mr. Rodrigo Duterte, has also placed inclusive peace and order at the top of his Change Agenda for the Philippines. This includes discussions to achieve peace across the nation, with rebel groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF). Incidentally, the present Secretary of Labor, Mr. Silvestro Bello III, is also now the head of the government panel negotiating with CPP-NPA-NDF. This gives an important dimension in the peace process as the issue of employment and livelihood could very well be discussed in the negotiation table. The message of President Duterte's solid commitment to peace and order is clear. It is that achieving peace and order is an indispensable component of social and economic reforms that address poverty and unemployment.

### **Strategies that would address the particular situation of young workers**

We are convinced that the youth is one of the driving forces of economic growth. However, they remain in the fringes of the economy with youth unemployment rate in the Philippines at a still relatively high rate of 13.5 percent. It is against this backdrop that we continue to enhance our human capital through investment in education and technical skills development, health and social services, which for the last several years have received bigger budget from the national government.

Our ten-year basic education program has been replaced with what we call the K to 12 Program, which provides our students with additional two years of learning to better prepare them to join the workplace. We have implemented the eight-level Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF), which covers basic, technical vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education.

Our strategic investment in skills training has produced more graduates with competitive skills who found employment. We have also started the *Jobstart Philippines* that shortens school-to-work transition for our youth by providing them with access to technical and life skills training demanded by employers.

**Practical steps that Member States can take to harness the development benefits of migration to alleviate poverty, reduce inequality, and realize the full potential of the 2030 Agenda for Migrants**

We acknowledge that the Philippine economy has benefitted immensely from migration with its resultant inflow of remittances. We, therefore, continue to ensure that migration is fully woven into our development agenda.

It is in this light that we have been consistent in negotiating better working conditions for our migrant workers at all levels – bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally. We believe that migrant protection and development are not mutually exclusive. Protecting migrants is one of the essential elements in the pursuit of social justice and development.

In our engagement with foreign governments, international organizations and civil societies, we have firmly advocated for the recognition of the positive contribution of migrants to sustainable development in the origin and destination countries; for the mainstreaming of migration in the development process; for the reduction of the costs of migration, including cost of remittances; and for the protection of migrants against illegal recruiters, exorbitant recruitment fees, traffickers, smugglers and drug syndicates.

Specific to large movement of people, and due to the large presence of Filipinos overseas, the Philippines has experienced situation where thousands of Filipino migrants were forcibly repatriated due to war, crises, natural calamities or other socio-economic situation in the destination country. Over the years, we have developed mechanisms for dealing with such contingencies, which include mandatory insurance and repatriation costs borne by the employer; an emergency evacuation and repatriation program; and a national reintegration program.

We have seen and felt the value of partnership and cooperation in advancing the agenda of migration and development. And this we continue to pursue with other states, international bodies and regional consultative processes.

**Key knowledge gaps that should be addressed regarding migration and steps to be taken for enhanced data collection**

The Philippines support the UN's call for more focused, forward looking, and better informed strategies in pursuing sustainable development and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies by investing in national and international migration data.

We need accurate and reliable data on migrants with irregular status in order to ensure protection for all migrants irrespective of their status. Because of their clandestine presence, information about them are usually unavailable, inaccurate or undisclosed. Data on migrant workers with irregular status can support national policies that open paths for legal status of migrants with the end in view of enhancing their positive contribution to development.

We need data on social security coverage and access to financial institutions of migrants in host countries to ensure universal coverage of social protection and financial security during their disability and old age. Well-designed and portable social security benefits, complemented with sustainable national reintegration programs will reinforce the benefits of migration to development.

Finally, we need to collect information on migrants' occupational safety and health conditions. These should lead to policies that address occupational diseases and causes of death, and the development of appropriate social protection and employees' compensation program for them. Inclusive social protection program is key in sustainable development.

Thank you for your attention.