

As written



PHILIPPINES

Statement

by

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and

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to the

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Commission on Population and Development**

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Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Philippine delegation, I would like to add to the many congratulatory remarks extended yesterday in your election as Chairperson of the current session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development.

The Philippine delegation would also like to commend the Population Division for the incisive reports which they have prepared for this meeting. In particular, the Concise Report on World Population Monitoring, which highlights the state of world population growth, structure and distribution brings to the fore the important linkages between demography and economics. For a developing country like the Philippines which gives premium to poverty eradication policies, the section of the report on population growth, poverty, food provision and the environment is particularly instructive.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to briefly describe the Philippine experience in the implementation of ICPD goals, before commenting on two reports prepared for this session pertaining to migration and financial resource flows.

The Philippines has performed relatively well in relation to the goals set out by ICPD, particularly in making policy, legislative and institutional changes. This can be seen in the establishment of such bodies as the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, the National Youth Commission and the numerous gender-sensitive policies and legislative initiatives of the Philippine Congress in the last four years. Of significant importance is the shift in policy directions of the Philippine Population Management Program from a demographic target-centered approach to a client-centered, integrated reproductive health approach. Institutionally, this shift also highlighted the important role of the civil society groups in the implementation of this new population framework that has led to viable partnerships with non-governmental organizations.

Notwithstanding, these important policy and institutional changes, the government is fully aware that the Philippines has one of the fastest growing population in the Asian region. This is validated in the 1998 National Demographic Survey which indicated a very high fertility rate of 3.7 children. Given this trend, the present population of the Philippines of 68.6 million is estimated to double in size in thirty years. By the year 2050, it is projected by the Population Division that the Philippines will rank number 2 among the countries with the highest population growth. Unless drastic changes in child bearing practices and reproductive goals are attained, the distribution of Philippine population will continue to be dominated by the younger age groups, implying increasing demand for basic education and jobs. Taking into account these findings, the newly elected government has formulated a revised population program, which gives emphasis in helping couples achieve their fertility goals within the context of responsible parenthood as well as in preventing teenage pregnancies, among others.

Mr. Chairman,

Turning now to the “Report on the Technical Symposium on International Migration and Development” the Philippine delegation shares the expression of support to the report by the earlier speakers. International migration is of special interest to the Philippines, being a major sending country of overseas workers in Asia. As of 1995, Filipino overseas workers, including non-contract workers number around 800.000.

The symposium covered a comprehensive set of issues relevant to both sending and receiving countries. Among these issues, we would like to highlight two - the impact of increasing female labor migration and the importance of remittances to development, particularly in times of economic crisis.

As a country of origin, the Philippines share the concerns expressed in the Symposium on Migration on the vulnerability of female migrant workers to exploitation and harassment and their tendency to take on the low status occupations. Equally important for sending countries like the Philippines, however, is the long-term social impact of the trend, while the report mentioned the positive effects of international migration on women empowerment, there is also increasing anecdotal evidence of family disintegration. Considering the important role of women and mothers in the promotion of adolescent health, for instance, not to mention other population objectives, the impact of the increasing levels of women migrant workers on population programs may have to be added in future discussions of the migration issue.

Meanwhile, being one of the countries recently affected by the Asian crisis, the inflows of remittances not only played a key role in preserving the expenditures of households with overseas workers, but on a more macroeconomic scale, these inflows made up for the drastic reduction in capital inflows in affected Asian countries, preventing what would otherwise be a severe disruption in economic activities. It is therefore important that further studies on the impact of remittances on development also take into account the macroeconomic consequences of these flows.

As a final point, the Philippine delegation would like to commend the UNFPA for preparing the report on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD. We would like to note the amount of drastically-generated flows for population activities, roughly estimated at \$7 billion. We are however concerned that the Asian crisis, which had spread to other parts of the World in the last two years, would have a significant impact in the capability of some developing countries in generating domestic resources to population related activities. While most of the affected countries are in the recovery stage, budgetary constraints faced by governments and corporate distress in the private sector may likely limit the provision of resources to population activities. Hence, developing countries will continue to turn to the donor community for assistance in promoting the goals of ICPD, at least in the medium-term.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.