



# PHILIPPINES

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**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION:  
THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE**

Statement by

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at the

**High-Level Plenary  
49<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)  
New York, 7 March 2005**

Madame Chairperson,

Members of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women,

Distinguished delegates,

Representatives of NGOs,

The Philippines is indeed pleased and honored to participate in this 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women as it celebrates ten years after the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and thirty years after the First World Conference in Mexico. The significance of this bit of history (or herstory) is not lost on us as we commemorate our own local milestones -- the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our national machinery, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (which makes it the oldest in Asia) as well as the centennial of the feminist movement in the Philippines, 100 years since the founding of the Asociacion Feminista Filipina, the first women's NGO in the Philippines.

I will not attempt to look back over the past hundred years in the five minutes given me but will share highlights of the past decade of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in our country.

At the outset, I take this opportunity to **strongly** and **unconditionally** affirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly. The Philippines rejects any and all attempts to weaken the Platform and betray the spirit of Beijing.

Filled with the spirit of Beijing and in the presence of the veterans of past world conferences as well as the younger generation of women advocates and activists, the Philippine delegation celebrates our gains for Filipino women over the past 10 years, identifies gaps and confronts persistent and emerging issues.

We celebrate gains in the promotion of women's human rights and in the elimination of violence against women through progressive legislation and programs and through ratification of and compliance with international conventions. The past ten years saw the passage of laws against sexual harassment, rape, trafficking and domestic violence. An inter-agency coordinating committee on violence against women was created. GO-NGO partnerships gave birth to innovative responses to issues of violence against women including the creation of women's desks in police precincts and government hospitals; gender awareness training for police, health workers, prosecutors and judges; and the institution of the "Gender Justice Awards" to raise the

quality of court decisions and to inspire judges to be gender sensitive in hearing and deciding on cases.

The Philippines has ratified the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the Protocol Against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea, and the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. We likewise ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

We celebrate the increasingly prominent role of women in decision-making in both the public and private spheres. Women managers rose from thirty three percent (33%) in 1995 to fifty-nine percent (59%) in 2003. In the cabinet, women not only increased their numbers but held critical positions in non-traditional fields such as foreign affairs, finance, budget and management, labor and employment, science and technology, justice, the peace<sup>2nd</sup> process, civil service and anti-poverty programs . Within the decade, the country has its <sup>2nd</sup> woman president with an unprecedented ten-year term. Women's leadership is evident, too, at the grassroots level where they participate actively in local governance and community affairs.

We celebrate gains in gender mainstreaming through the systematic development of mechanisms and instruments. In partnership with the Budget Department, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women crafted the GAD Budget Policy that provides for the allocation of at least five percent of the budget of national and local agencies for use in gender and development programs.

The National Economic and Development Authority, the government central planning agency, together with the Commission on Women and the Overseas Development Assistance-Gender and Development Network developed the "Harmonized GAD Guidelines for Project Development, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation" which serve as a tool for all government agencies, development practitioners and international donor organizations to ensure that gender concerns are fully integrated in the various stages of the project cycle. Although we noted breakthrough work in gender sensitive poverty indicators, we are likewise aware that there are still gaps in obtaining sex-disaggregated data in almost all areas of major concern.

The milestones in gender mainstreaming would not have been possible without a strong national machinery for women. We believe in this winning formula -- gender mainstreaming along with strong institutional mechanisms that serve as advocates for gender equality and empowered gender focal points, to provide leadership and passion. We celebrate the strategic impact of our

national machinery *for women* over the last decade, *not only* nationally but internationally. Thus, our continuing *effort* to strengthen it further.

We likewise hail the fact that our achievements in women empowerment had been the result of the strong partnerships forged among various stakeholders in the country — government agencies, the academe, the legislative branch, the judiciary, local government units, the non-government and people's organizations and civil society groups..

We celebrate the country's systematic and strategic efforts addressed at women and poverty mainly through micro-finance services that go beyond the traditional minimalist approach. Gender empowerment, family planning, social safety nets, entrepreneurial and business development are becoming integral parts of micro-finance, that as of 2004 had 1.9 million entrepreneurial poor women as regular clients.

We join the Global Campaign Against Poverty through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We affirm that gender equality and women's empowerment, through the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing + 5 Outcome Document, is essential to the achievement of the MDGs. We stress the need to gather and provide sex-disaggregated data across all the Millennium Development Goals and to make MDG-based poverty reduction strategies gender-sensitive. We recognize that stronger partnership between the developed and developing countries will help in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and we call on donor countries to deliver on their long standing commitment to provide 0.7 percent of their GNP as official development assistance by 2015.

At the international and multilateral level, *we* advocate the strengthening of the UN institutional mechanisms for gender equality. We believe that UNIFEM, *INSTRAW* and DAW should be given the appropriate status and authority and sufficient resources. We likewise urge that the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women be provided the necessary support especially in additional meetings and sessions to carry out its increased workload and reduce its back log. The work of a Filipino woman expert, Ms. Rosario Manalo, as Chair of the CEDAW, is another testament to the unflinching commitment by the country to contribute to the international framework for the elimination of gender discrimination.

While we celebrate our gains, we confront persistent and emerging challenges. The trafficking of women and girls remains a serious problem exacerbated by the use of cyber-technology. We applaud the steps taken by countries to prevent trafficking of women into and through their borders while we continue to work at the source to empower poor women, the majority of whom are in the rural areas and make them less vulnerable to exploitation. We will continue to forge

international understanding and cooperation towards a gender-based approach to curb the trafficking problem by shepherding the resolution on trafficking in women and girls at the General Assembly.

As Filipino women now comprise more than half of land-based overseas workers, major reforms are undertaken by the government to better protect migrant women workers before departure and in their places of employment. However, this remains an area of concern. At the international level, the Philippines will contribute to collaborative approaches and strategies aimed at protecting and promoting the rights and welfare of women migrant workers, including through the biennial resolution on violence against women migrant workers at the General Assembly.

We confront the realities of war and conflict and the impact on women and children. While the Philippine government continues its peace negotiations with rebel groups, the role of women in the prevention of conflict as well as in post conflict situations is beginning to be appreciated and addressed.

The Philippines has had its share of natural disasters and thus can empathize with our neighbors regarding the horror caused by the devastating tsunami. While we offer our prayers and support to the victims, we strongly urge that all relief, recovery and long-term reconstruction efforts be imbued with a gender perspective that protects women and children, who make up the majority of the victims, from further violence and abuse, that they be allowed to participate actively in the decisions and actions that determine their future.

In conclusion, Madame Chairperson, the Philippines celebrates the many gains since Beijing but we are also painfully aware that so much remains to be done. As we start the second week of our deliberations at this 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, let us not spend time debating and negotiating more promises. Let us, with renewed commitment and political will, act now on the promises we made in Beijing. Thank you.