



PHILIPPINE STATEMENT

21st Meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

“Sea-level rise and its impacts”

AGENDA ITEM 3: General Exchange of Views

14 June 2021

The Philippines wishes to thank the Co-Chairs, H.E. Ms. Isabelle F. Picco, Permanent Representative of the Principality of Monaco, and H.E. Mr. Viliami Va'inga Tōnē, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga, for their efforts in turning this 21st Meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP21) into reality.

The Philippines has supported this process from the onset, including the Co-Chairs' proposals on the topics to be considered by the discussion panel and the panel segments.

As an archipelagic state with numerous low-lying coastal areas and communities, the Philippines is considered one of the countries most vulnerable to sea-level rise and its effects. As a low-middle income developing country with a growing population of 108.7 million, located in the Tropical Cyclone belt and the Pacific Ring of Fire, the Philippines is indeed extremely vulnerable to climate-related and geological hazards.

The entire Philippines will experience significant amounts of sea level rise, accounting for about twice to even three times that of the global average. Climate change will cease being an abstract concept as people living in coastal areas see floods, lose mangrove forests, experience more storm surges, and catch less fish.

A scientist from the Philippines, Professor Fernando Siringan, demonstrated this vulnerability in graphic terms in his presentation for the ICP21 under the segment on “Sea level rise: understanding the issue, its impacts and related challenges”. In his presentation, Professor Siringan showed how human activities are exacerbating sea level rise.

The Philippines is working hard to address this urgent existential issue. Last year, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) and its National Panel of Technical Experts (NPTE) brought together stakeholders, including local and international experts, to assess the current science on sea level rise and to identify gaps in information gathering, monitoring and communication. The CCC initiative aims to enable the sharing of good practices, innovative technologies, and latest policy reforms on sea level rise as part of a comprehensive study assessing the potential of different climate change scenarios on sea-level rise and associated hazards.

With the submission of our Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) this year, we continue to work towards a climate and disaster-resilient and low carbon economy pandemic recovery while supporting the aim of the Paris Agreement to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. We remain committed to our pledge of 75% GHG emissions reduction to avert the climate crisis but we recognize that we need to do more to advance climate research and develop policy tools to help communities survive and thrive amidst climate change and sea-level rise.

Finally, we wish to reaffirm our understanding that the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. It is in this spirit that we take part in ICP21 and support oceans-related processes that help synergize multilateral action on crosscutting issues, just as we have supported the long-term program of work of the International Law Commission in considering the issue of sea-level rise as it relates to the UNCLOS, statehood, and protection of persons who are affected by sea-level rise. END