

PHILIPPINE STATEMENT

**Delivered by Undersecretary Lisa Grace S. Bersales, Ph.D.,
the Executive Director of the
Commission on Population and Development of the Philippines**

**during the 56TH Session of the Commission on Population and
Development on 10-14 April 2023**

Theme: Population, Education and Sustainable Development

Mr. Chair, Excellencies,

The Philippines is pleased to participate in the Commission on Population and Development's 56th session. The session's theme is highly timely and pertinent for our country, as the most recent demographic trends present significant opportunities to accelerate socioeconomic and human development.

The Philippines' total fertility rate has significantly decreased, from 6 children in the 1970s to 1.9 children in 2022, which is already below replacement fertility level. As a result of declining fertility, the population growth rate has been steadily slowing down, and population structures are changing. A wider window of opportunity for maximizing the demographic dividend has now opened up as a result. However, the demographic structures of the country's regions are still very different. The socioeconomic makeup of the population is also quite diverse, with poor and less educated women and young girls, particularly in rural areas, having higher fertility rate.

Given this demographic backdrop, the Philippine government's emphasis on transformative education and lifelong learning is essential for enhancing the nation's capacity for economic growth through the production of skilled labor. All Filipinos have a fundamental human right—guaranteed by our Constitution—to access to high-quality education.

With the socioeconomic development agenda of President Ferdinand Marcos' Administration, transformative lifelong opportunities shall be pursued as an integral strategy to ensure that all Filipinos are able to realize their full potential. The Philippine Development Plan for 2023-2028 includes transformative education and lifelong learning as a core approach.

The country began transforming our basic educational system in 2013 with the K-12 basic education program, which added two levels of high school, with the goal of providing all Filipino learners with the necessary skills and competencies to prepare them to face the challenges of the twenty-first century. To support this educational reform, the Department of Education (DepEd) has launched the MATATAG strategy (Matatag being the Filipino word for sturdy, stable or strong), with key initiatives on curriculum, basic education facilities and services, learners by promoting learners' wellbeing; and support to teachers.

For higher education, the country is pursuing the production of gender-sensitive, locally responsive, innovative, and globally competitive graduates through the leadership of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) by ensuring that 1) disadvantaged groups have opportunities to earn college degrees and become employed; 2) higher education institutions deliver high quality programs and services; 3) internationalization initiatives prepare students to live and work in multi-cultural communities; and 4) social responsibility programs for higher education institutions in supporting communities to attain sustainable development.

Our Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP) for 2023-2028 establishes a framework for coordinated action among youth, various institutions, and stakeholders at all levels. Our Philippine Population and Development Program (PPDP) for 2023-2028, has adopted a life-cycle and intergenerational approach to development recognizing as a critical demographic strategy- the necessity of boosting expenditure on adolescent and child development and well-being, as well as maintaining older age groups' well-being.

Mr. Chair,

The policy and program environment for holistic human capital development is also enabled by various laws including the Philippine Qualifications Framework Act (RA 10968) that aims to establish standards and levels of learning outcomes aligned with industry qualifications.

Executive Order No. 141 establishes a whole-of-government approach to mobilize all sectors and stakeholders at all levels to prevent unplanned pregnancies among girls and to enable adolescent mothers to continue their education or skills development through alternative learning systems or modalities, in order to further strengthen the government's action toward the significant reduction of adolescent pregnancies.

Mr. Chair,

The Philippines remains committed to achieving the remaining goals of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. We remain steadfast in working towards international consensus and collaborative actions in promoting sustainable human and socioeconomic development.

Thank you very much.