



PHILIPPINES

**Statement of Honorable Ernesto M. Pernia,
Secretary of Socioeconomic Planning,
National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)
during the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and
Development in UN Headquarters, New York City, 1-5 April 2019**

Mister Chair,

The Philippine delegation extends its warmest congratulations to you and the members of your bureau for your well-deserved election, and your work in facilitating a successful outcome document for this session.

Mister Chair,

The Government of the Philippines strongly recognizes the interdependence of population and sustainable development. Such recognition has been concretely translated into national policies and programs such as the Philippine Population Management Program established fifty years ago. The Philippine Population Management Program was anchored on the principles of the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action. Today, our commitment to ICPD is even made stronger through our Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law (RA 10354).

We are pleased to share that our country has achieved significant milestones at the outcome and policy levels even within the context of challenging political and cultural factors. Filipinos continue to increase in numbers, at around 2

million annually, even as the growth rate has declined to 1.76%. Our total fertility rate has likewise gone down to 2.7 children, closer to the desired fertility rate of 2.4 children on average. Adolescent fertility rate has likewise taken a downward trend. Fertility decline in the country has been facilitated by increasing contraceptive use for modern methods from 38% in 2013 to 40% in 2017, still a measly increase in four years.

Unprecedentedly, there are now more rural women than urban women who are using modern family planning methods. Moreover, access to maternal, neonatal, and child health care services has likewise improved over recent years.

President Duterte's firm policy actions on population and development should enable us to meet our goals in the medium term. Some of those actions are (1) the issuance of Executive Order No. 12 to achieve and sustain zero unmet need for modern family planning by 2022; (2) the inclusion of the full implementation of the RPRH Law as one of the priority socioeconomic agenda; and, (3) the approval of the intensified implementation of the National Program on Population and Family Planning.

The Philippines is no longer the economic laggard in our region. Our economy has been growing 6 percent or better for fifteen straight quarters, and at an average rate of 6.5 percent during the first ten quarters of this administration. This shows that we are on a higher growth trajectory. Today, we are exerting our efforts to ensure that our economic gains at the national level will translate to a better quality of life for each Filipino.

As part of our socioeconomic strategies under our Philippine Development Plan for 2017-2022, we are pursuing policy interventions to reach for and optimize the demographic dividend. An important part of the strategy are measures to improve and develop our human capital to full potential. To ensure better health outcomes among Filipinos, the government has just enacted the Universal Health Care (UHC) Law. The law mandates the enrollment of all citizens into the National Health Insurance Program and expanding its coverage

to include free medical consultations and laboratory tests. Moreover, we also continue to institutionalize education reforms through our K-12 program and the provision of free tuition and fees for tertiary students of state universities and colleges to improve the educational status and skills of our human resources.

Mister Chair,

While we have considerably advanced the agenda of ICPD in the country, we still have remaining gaps and challenges to address. To this end, with strong political will and resolve from our national leaders, we shall vigorously pursue strategic ways and means to ensure people-centered self-sustaining development towards the realization of the ICPD agenda in the country.

Lastly, the Philippines recognizes that our milestones in pursuing the ICPD agenda at the global level were driven by our commonalities rather than differences. Twenty-five years ago, we have signified our common vision to improve the sexual and reproductive health and rights, in accordance with our laws, of our people and to attain people-centered self-sustaining development through the ICPD POA. With such collective vision, we call on all countries present here today to renew our commitment of implementing the ICPD.

Thank you very much, Mister Chair.