

Statement delivered by

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Madam Chair,

The Philippine delegation congratulates you and the members of your Bureau for your election. We commit our full support to your leadership in the successful and meaningful resolution and discussion of the important agenda for this 48th Session.

The Philippines aligns with the position of G77 and China.

Madam Chair,

As a signatory to the ICPD Programme of Action, the Philippines recognizes that population issues in the country remain critical concerns in sustainable development. The government has laid out its development path towards inclusive growth which aims to put all Filipinos, who are now more than 100 million in number, at the center of sustainable development.

Central to the realization of inclusive growth is the implementation of our recently enacted national Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law, which we consider as the articulation of the Philippine commitment to the ICPD.

Our current initiatives are focused on addressing the remaining challenges of the ICPD Programme of Action within our national context. These critical population issues that we recommend to be integrated in the sustainable development goals include: a) achieving and fulfilling sexual and reproductive health and rights; b) promoting adolescent health including the reduction of teenage pregnancy; c) addressing issues

related to mobility and urbanization of Filipinos; and d) facilitating the necessary conditions for demographic dividend.

Achieving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Our collective goal of improving the sexual and reproductive health of all Filipinos remains one of the priority strategies of the government for inclusive growth. Our efforts have indeed yielded some key improvements in the access of women to reproductive health services. Our latest National Demographic and Health Survey (2013) reported a high proportion of women (95%) who received antenatal care from skilled health providers; about 60 percent of whom delivered in health facilities; and 73 percent assisted by skilled birth attendants. The fertility level among Filipino women is declining from a Total Fertility Rate of 3.3 children in 2008 to 3.0 children in 2013. The use of modern family planning methods is also increasing from 34 percent in 2008 to 37.6 percent in 2013.

Our focus is now towards the full implementation of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law to ensure universal access of Filipinos, particularly the poor, to appropriate reproductive health information and services. For this purpose, national and sub-national implementation structures were organized and are now being mobilized to implement the law. The enhancement of health facilities and competencies of health service providers; the procurement and distribution of reproductive health supplies and commodities; and massive information campaigns to let encourage people to claim their rights and entitlements under the law are now being put in place.

Moreover, the Philippines, through the implementation of the RPRH law, is facilitating an enabling environment for the attainment of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all Filipinos without any discrimination due to sex, age, economic status, ethnicity, disability, religious and political beliefs, sexual orientation and gender identity, and other social category. For this, continuing discourse and consultations for policy and program development are being undertaken.

While the country has achieved some positive improvements in the reproductive health conditions of Filipinos, we remain committed in our efforts to realize universal access to

RH information and services. The most critical challenge that we are now addressing is the rapid reduction of maternal mortality from a high 221 maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to 52 MMR. Meeting the expressed need for family planning of around 18 percent of currently married women in the Philippines is likewise a critical challenge that we need to respond to.

Preventing and Reducing Teenage Pregnancy

Another critical challenge that we need to address is the increasing incidence of teenage pregnancy. This situation among young Filipinos calls for intensified efforts to enable young people to access comprehensive life skills-based information, education, and services on sexual and reproductive health. As a response to this challenge, the RPRH Law mandated the integration of comprehensive sexuality and reproductive health education in the formal and information educational curriculum and teaching modules. Our Department of Education together with various stakeholders from the government and non-government is now developing the teaching modules to be integrated in our current education reforms.

Also in relation to building the potentials of young Filipinos, the country is vigorously implementing initiatives to promote universal access to primary education through educational reforms such as the K12 program; to promote reintegration of pregnant girls and young mothers into education at all levels; and to eliminate harmful traditional practices such as child and early forced marriages.

Addressing Issues Related to Mobility and Urbanization of Filipinos

As of 2010, about 45 percent of Filipinos were living in the urban areas indicating a pattern of rapid urbanization in the country. Given this challenge, the Philippine government is intensifying its database on internal migration to support appropriate planning and policy development. In addition to this, the country is currently working towards the institutionalization of appropriate policies that aim to: a) support people's decision to move internally and provide equal opportunities and access to social protection, basic services, employment, and use of natural resources; b) fulfill the need for housing and support infrastructures; c) establish effective database on the needs of

migrants and local residents for use in planning and policy development; and d) facilitate linkages between urban and rural areas with emphasis on increasing economic investments in rural areas to equalize opportunities and to make informed migration decisions.

The issues related to international migration are also a significant population and development concern in the country. As of 2012, there were 10.46 million Filipinos living and working abroad temporarily or permanently. Our country continues to strengthen its policy and programs for the promotion and protection of the rights of Filipinos working abroad through bilateral and multilateral agreements and strengthening of national policies for the welfare of overseas Filipino workers. Efforts are also being made towards expanding services and assistance to Filipino labor migrants through the strengthening of our overseas labor offices. Initiatives for empowering and protecting the welfare of the families-left-behind of Filipino migrants are also being undertaken. Lastly, we are currently strengthening our reintegration program to ensure that our Filipino overseas workers are efficiently mainstreamed in the economy and society.

Facilitating the Necessary Conditions for Demographic Dividend

The increasing working age population particularly among adolescents implies the need to invest on their education, health and development as they constitute a vast potential for significant dividends. We are putting more investments in education and health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, expanding human opportunity and capabilities among young people that would be particularly advantageous for creating the conditions for a “demographic dividend.”

The integration of population dynamics in sectoral development particularly socio-economic sectors is likewise a vital strategy in realizing the potentials of achieving a demographic dividend. As such, the country is undertaking initiatives that improve the generation of demographic and socio-economic data especially at the local level to more efficiently inform development planning and policy development. The integration of population dynamics in environmental planning is likewise an important endeavor that

we are pursuing given the high vulnerability of our country to natural disasters and calamities.

Madam Chair,

We join the rest of the world in believing that realizing the future we want essentially entails putting people at the center of sustainable development. This is, however, a huge task in the context of prevailing poverty and inequality in our country. Despite our economic limitation, nonetheless, we shall continue to pursue policy and program reforms that ensure the integration of population dynamics and issues in the mainstream of sustainable development programming. Our goal of realizing inclusive growth will remain the policy framework that will guide all our development initiatives. These initiatives will also be guided by our appreciation and commitment to pursue the remaining key challenges of the ICPD and MDGs in the country.

Lastly, we join the call to include key population issues and agenda in the Sustainable Development Goals particularly those that were not achieved within the ICPD and MDG frameworks. We likewise call for sustained assistance by developed countries not only to developing nations but also to countries that are transitioning to middle-income level.

Thank you, Madam Chair.