



PHILIPPINES

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Statement

by

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at the

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Mr. Chairman,

The Philippine delegation expresses its warmest congratulations to you and the members of your Bureau on your well-deserved election. You can count on its commitment, cooperation and support in working towards the successful completion of the tasks at hand this 41st Session. The Philippines also aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative from Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

The prospect for rising urbanization worldwide is indeed imminent and the Philippines is in the same trend. The Philippines is a fast urbanizing society with 48 percent of its total population living in urban areas in 2000 compared to 37 percent more than two decades ago. Twelve years from now, the country is expected to be more or less 65 percent urbanized. This rapid urbanization growth has occurred in the last four or five decades when many rural dwellers trooped to urban centers in search for good fortune and good life. The urban population grew rapidly at annual rate of about five percent from 1960 to 1995 and has since slowed to approximately three percent annually.

In its recent publication, the State of the Philippine Population Report 3, which features the interconnections of population, urbanization and local governance, two patterns of urbanization in terms of geographic location are noted. The first pattern points to the consistency of high migrant inflows in the National Capital Region, Central Luzon (Region III), Southern Tagalog (Region IV) Central Visayas (Region VII),

Northern Mindanao (Region X), and Southern Mindanao (Region XI) since 1970. The second pattern indicates that urban population has remained spatially concentrated.

Moreover, the recent study conducted by the *Commission on Population* on internal migration notes that the condition of urban primacy of Metro Manila since 1970 is slowly declining due to the phenomenon of urban sprawl. Of the 1,500 towns and cities in the Philippines, the 14 urban areas with population sizes exceeding 250,000 accounted about 55 percent of urban population in 1970 and only about 44 percent in 2000. Interestingly, in 2000, Region IV-A consisting of the more industrialized provinces in Southern Tagalog adjacent to Metro Manila on the south emerged as the most preferred destination of internal migrations with 26 percent of migrants as compared to 19 percent in Metro Manila. The glaring trend is that smaller towns and cities are starting to have higher population growth than the larger cities, indicating that migration has started to favor smaller urban centers as areas of destination and gradual geographic deconcentration of the urban population has started. This is mostly because of spillover effects.

Mr. Chairman,

Urbanization in the Philippines is inevitable. Thus, it must be faced realistically that it is gaining or profiting from its advantages and minimizing its disadvantages. The Philippines is looking at urbanization as a phenomenon that creates opportunities and provides challenges rather than as a threat and burden. Accordingly, it is pleased to report that at the core of its current blueprint for development are positive measures and strategies that take on the challenge of optimizing the gains which would be derived from the phenomenon of urbanization.

Regional development, as a response to the high concentration of development in urbanized areas, has been enshrined in the policy and administrative agenda of the every administration. For the current administration, this is a core component among its agenda bannered as "BEAT THE ODDS," which stands for or the euphemistic acronym of **B**alanced budget; **E**ducation for all; **A**utomated elections; **T**ransportation and digital infrastructure; **T**erminate hostilities with the MILF and NPA; **H**eal the wounds of EDSAs I, II and III; **E**lectricity and water for all; **O**pportunities for livelihood; **D**econgestion of Metro Manila; and **D**evelopment of Subic and Clark. This 10-point agenda is embodied the Medium Term Development Plan (MTPDP) for 2004-2010. Among the regional development strategies being implemented include national dispersion through regional deconcentration, enhancement of the urban-rural linkages, resource-and-area-based development, effective mechanisms for regional development administration, and delivery of minimum desirable levels of welfare. By the way, this MTPDP is also the Philippines responses to the MDGSSs.

The Philippines likewise recognizes that managing rapid urban population growth is a matter of concern, especially by the local government units (LGUs) which have the most direct connection with their constituents. Under Executive Order 307 issued by the President and Section 17 of the Local Government Code, LGUs are directed to provide services and carry out programs on population. Thus, they are expected to manage the problems arising from population growth resulting from urbanization and development.

Aside from the Local Government Code, the Congress of the Philippines has also enacted Republic Act 7279 otherwise known as the "Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) of 1992." The law requires local governments to adopt an effective mechanism to monitor trends in the movement of people from rural to urban, urban to urban, and urban to rural areas. They are required to identify measures by which such movements can be influenced to achieve balance between urban capabilities and population to ultimately direct appropriate segments of the population into areas where they can have opportunities to improve their lives and contribute to national growth.

The Philippines' local government units are now at the forefront of making their own cities work. The use of various models and good practices in managing the changes brought by urbanization are now being intensified and promoted to empower LGUs reap the benefits of the urbanization phenomenon in their areas. These models are anchored on interlocking goals and policy directions which include: (1) building productive population; (2) provision of responsive service delivery; (3) revenue generation; (4) optimizing investment opportunities; (5) achieving environmental sustainability; and (6) sustained productivity. Cooperation among cities and adjacent municipalities is also being pursued as a way of improving governance and management of urbanization in their areas. Several configurations of partnerships and cooperation are emerging in the Philippine scene. These include, among others, the creation of legal structure like the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), Metropolitan Cebu Development Council (MCDC), and Metropolitan Iloilo Development Authority (MIDA).

Mr. Chairman,

In line with the previously mentioned policy and program interventions that the Philippines is implementing to respond to the challenges and opportunities of urbanization, it is also seriously addressing the future and the far reaching implications of rapid population growth. In short, the Philippines is taking a holistic perspective on and response to on the interconnected issues of population and development, including poverty, as not only an urbanization challenge, but also as a concern for human well-being and welfare under the broader concept of social justice and human rights which the Constitution of the Philippines guarantees.

The Philippines is pleased to report that it is presently implementing an integrated approach to addressing poverty through the Accelerated Hunger Mitigation Program (AHMP). Although the program provides interventions to help mitigate hunger as a painful product of poverty, one of its critical components is population management. This is a long-term approach to address large family size as an indirect determinant of poverty. The present population management program is focusing on empowering parents, particularly the vulnerable and poor, to responsibly plan and nurture their families through expanding their choices on family planning methods by capacitating them to use less expensive scientific natural family planning methods. The campaign for responsible parenthood and natural family planning has already reached about 101,000 couples in the entire country.

Slowly but surely, local chief executives and legislators are recognizing the need to address emerging population issues resulting from migration and fertility and the importance of investing in people. More and more local governments are strengthening their policy environment for population and reproductive health (RH) through enactment of RH ordinances. These ordinances do not only ensure the provision of quality RH and population information and services to women, couples and individuals but they also provide for the establishment of mechanisms that monitor population flow and mobility in their respective areas. As of late, two premier cities in the country (Olongapo City and Quezon City) have demonstrated their political will in passing their respective population and RH ordinances.

Another significant implication of urbanization is the sustainability of the environment. With population growth comes the continuous threat of environmental degradation which tremendously affect development. Air pollution and unmanaged solid waste disposals are among the serious problems being faced by urban areas in the country. These problems do not only affect the quality of environment, but more importantly they affect the health and development status of the people. Having this in mind, the call to design and implement integrated approaches and programs addressing these interconnected issues have been heeded by various sectors in the Philippines through the integrated implementation of Population, Health and Environment (PHE) interventions. The Philippines is one of the pioneering countries which have adopted the PHE framework as an approach to population, health and environment issues. This program is being implemented in areas with various ecological systems, including urban localities. Best practices on PHE in the Philippines have been lauded and made models not only within the country but also internationally. The fifth issue of the **State of the Philippine Population Report** will feature the PHE situation in the country as a way of intensifying the call for a more integrated approach in addressing PHE issues including migration and urbanization.

Mr. Chairman,

While the Philippines through its various sectors is doing its share to address the issues resulting from urbanization and migration worldwide, it recognizes the continuing challenge to ultimately translate the gains from these interventions into meaningful development for the people. As a Member of the United Nations and one of its founding fathers, the Philippines shall continue to do its share in achieving its commitment to the ICPD and MDGs to provide better quality of life to the people.

The Philippines joins the rest of the world in renewing the call for a more holistic, coherent, effective and efficient interventions in taking optimum benefits from the positive aspects of urbanization; and, on the other hand, presenting or mitigating its ill effects. Finally, the Philippines urges on the international community to continue heeding the call for unified action in addressing population and development concerns, particularly in the developing countries.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.