

**National Statement for the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF16), to delivered on 26 April 2021, by Roy A. Cimatu, Secretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Republic of the Philippines**

Mr. Chair,

The Philippines reaffirms its commitment to continuously promote sustainable forest management and exert vigorous efforts to achieve the 6 shared global goals on forests by rehabilitating unproductive, denuded, and degraded forestlands through the country's enhanced national greening program, national forest protection program, and other initiatives.

Since 2011, through the ENGP, we were able to rehabilitate a total of 2 million hectares of degraded forestlands with 1.8 billion seedlings planted nationwide. Due to the limitations brought by the covid-19 pandemic, the Philippines implemented policy improvements on the ENGP. In 2020, our country shifted to family implementation approach to support our government's objective of providing additional income to upland and rural families affected by the pandemic.

We also focused on planting bamboo as a priority commodity, because bamboo plays an important role in soil stabilization, air quality improvement, erosion control, and carbon sequestration.

The Philippine forestry sector has been actively involved in addressing the impacts of the pandemic. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, used the mechanized and modernized forest nursery facilities for agricultural production to ensure food security during community quarantine. A total of 3.2 million vegetable seedlings were produced and distributed to LGUs, communities, and people's organizations affected by the pandemic.

The forestry sector also donated a total of 272,000 board feet of confiscated lumber to government agencies and institutions for the construction of covid-19 quarantine facilities and quarters.

We have updated the national forest protection program for 2021 to 2025, to emphasize the significance of improving forest cover in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

On march 21<sup>st</sup> this year, as we pave the road to recovery and restoration, the Philippines joined the international community in celebrating the international day of forests 2021 with the theme, "*Forest restoration: A path to recovery and well-being,*" through a webinar and series of fitness activities.

This year also marks the start of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. It stresses the need for cooperation,

coordination, and synergies in works related to ecosystem restoration among relevant united nations entities.

With this, please be assured of the firm commitment of the Philippines to the United Nations in achieving the targets of the UN strategic plan for forests.

Thank you very much.