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# PHILIPPINES

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Statement delivered by

Hon. Myrna T. Yao  
Chairperson  
National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women

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United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**

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Mr. Chair,

My delegation is pleased that the current session of the Commission has focused its discussion on the critical issue of financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Philippines started the institutionalization of financial resources for gender programs in 1992 with the passage of the Women in Development and Nation-Building Act. This law mandated the allocation of at least 5 - 30 per cent of ODA funds for programs focused on women's empowerment and gender equality. In the same year as the Beijing Conference, the Philippines instituted a Gender And Development Budget policy instructing all government entities to allocate at least five percent of their total budget of gender-related activities.

These foreign and domestic resources for gender equality and women's empowerment have been used to enhance literacy and empowerment programs for rural and indigenous women. They have enabled women micro-entrepreneurs to have better access to credit, training, product development, technology, information, markets and social protection.

Mr. Chair,

The Philippines congratulates the United Nations for launching a global campaign on Violence against Women. We hope that this initiative will open avenues for increased resources to end this scourge.

In the Philippines, the GAD budgets support programs and services to implement anti-Violence Against Women (or VAW) laws. These include women and children's protection desks and special hearing rooms in police precincts and hospitals; shelters, counseling and productivity skills enhancement; and the institution of more gender-sensitive procedures for handling VAW cases. A

synergized VAW documentation system with identified indicators is currently being developed. Our VAW efforts recognize the important role of men in ending VAW. We have organized a movement called MOVE or “Men Opposed to Violence against women Everywhere”. Furthermore, no less than the President has expressed her commitment to end gender-based violence by proclaiming a special 18-day anti-VAW campaign every year.

The global phenomenon of migration poses particular challenges for women. To address these, the Philippine government, through its embassies, consulates and port authorities, extends protective and rehabilitative services to women migrant workers who suffer from sexual and other abuses. As part of a comprehensive approach to ensure the welfare of returning migrant workers, especially the women, the government has set up a reintegration center for more organized and holistic interventions that respond to personal, economic and community reintegration issues.

Social welfare programs recognize the critical role of women in eradicating poverty. The Philippines is piloting a program that will capacitate mothers to self-manage funds for their families’ health, nutrition and education.

Mr. Chair,

In preparing the national development plan and budget, we ensure that GAD principles and GAD-related programs are explicitly integrated. At the local level, using the Community-Based Monitoring System, data at the household- and village-level have been used for evidence-based legislation, gender planning and budgeting. In this process, there is increased cooperation between government and non-government actors, particularly women’s NGOs. The private sector is also being tapped as a partner for gender-responsive corporate social responsibility.

The Philippines continues to generate and utilize gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data for gender-responsive planning and program formulation. We will be including questions relating to violence against women in the forthcoming National Demographic and Health Survey.

To complete the loop of planning, budgeting, implementing, and monitoring, an audit of GAD funds focusing on efficiency and effectiveness of GAD expenditures is currently being worked out by the Commission on Audit as their gender mainstreaming initiative.

Mr. Chair,

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness acknowledged that harmonization efforts are needed on cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality. In 2005, the Philippines developed and adopted the *Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines for Project Development, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation* which aims to provide donor organizations and government with a common set of guidelines for developing, implementing and monitoring gender-responsive programs and projects and for tracking utilization of ODA funds.

Our years of gender advocacy are bearing fruits. Late last year, the World Economic Forum ranked the Philippines as number six in the Global Gender Gap Index, the only Asian country in the top ten that measured up to the benchmarks set forth by this body. Though we take pride in being part of the top ten, we can never be complacent. We will further our efforts to improve the overall levels of income and health, including reducing maternal mortality.

Mr. Chair,

We are concerned about the negative impact of emerging issues such as climate change, armed conflict and terrorism, particularly on women. Climate

change further increases women's vulnerability to natural disasters, food shortage and diseases, among others. Armed conflict and terrorism continue to put women and children in precarious situations. We look to the discussions in these fora to come up with innovative approaches on how to address these concerns.

The post-Beijing scenario with its emerging issues requires a stronger and more effective United Nations to deliver on its programmatic and financial commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. The Philippines welcomes the UN reform process and strongly supports the creation of a highly placed and ambitiously funded women-specific entity with normative as well as operational functions. This strong gender architecture should be responsive to the needs of Member States and accountable to women's movements. It will not only provide the necessary leadership in shepherding the resources for gender concerns but also ensure that the goals for which these funds are set are effectively achieved at all levels.

In finding innovative means of financing, we support the recommendation of the Secretary-General regarding debt financing measures. We reiterate the call to consider the *Debt-for-Equity in MDG projects* proposal. We call on the UN to spearhead an international campaign to change the concept of debt sustainability from "capacity to pay" to "level of debt that allow developing countries to achieve the MDGs" where debt payments do not hinder the attainment of the MDGs, especially the cross-cutting goal number three.

We believe that there can be no aid effectiveness without development effectiveness and no development effectiveness without women's development and gender equality!

Thank you.