Agenda item 4: Review of regional progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and opportunities for achieving the SDGs

Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, and Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon.

As other nations have also experienced, the Philippines faced constraints in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) due to several challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when quarantine and mobility restrictions were implemented. The economy suffered a record contraction of 9.5 percent in 2020, disrupting the high growth norm of 6 to 7 percent in the past decade.

Despite this, the country continued to uphold its commitments to the SDGs. Agenda 2030 has proven to be invaluable in cultivating a deep understanding of the inter-linkages among economic, social, and environmental outcomes. We have gone to great lengths to incorporate the SDGs in our Philippine Development Plan, while reshaping our objective from recovery to steering the economy to its high-growth trajectory.

After a year of the Plan’s implementation, the labor market made steady progress in 2023 amid downside risks on the domestic and external fronts. Last year, the unemployment and underemployment rates dropped to 4.6 percent and 13.6 percent, respectively.

Amid high cost of fuel and agriculture inputs, the Philippines immediately provided assistance to both producers and consumers, while also
implementing programs intended to improve agricultural productivity. Headline inflation decelerated from 7.2 percent to 4.8 percent by the second half of 2023, resulting in an average inflation rate of 6.0 percent for the full year 2023.

The government continues to implement various social protection policies and programs with stakeholders. We also passed sectoral plans such as the Social Protection Plan 2023-2028 and the Philippine Program Against Child Labor Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2023-2028.

Despite the country's accomplishments, overall progress towards the SDGs remains slow. That is why at the sub-national level, we started capacitating regional stakeholders in formulating the SDG Catch-up Plans using local data and policy framework called Every Policy is Connected or EPIC Tool. The sub-national catch-up plans intend to accelerate local initiatives on regressing SDG indicators based on the Philippines' SDG Pace of Progress.

As we reflect on the progress made and the challenges ahead, let us renew our commitment to the SDGs and redouble our efforts towards achieving them. The 2030 Agenda is more than just a matter of meeting deadlines. Ultimately, it is about the pursuit of a better life for all of us, in which no one is left behind.

Thank you very much.