Intervention for the 2nd Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific

Agenda Item 4: Civil registration and vital statistics as an accelerator for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring no one is left behind

“Under agenda item 4, it is anticipated the Conference will provide remarks on the linkages between sustainable development and well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics systems, in particular to ensure that everyone can realize their right to a legal identity and is included in official statistics. The Conference may further wish to provide guidance on how to accelerate inequality assessments for civil registration and vital statistics systems in Asia and the Pacific. Delegations may thus wish to focus their statements on the issues for recommendations from the supporting document, share experiences and discuss areas where more efforts are needed to address inequalities during the second half of the Asia and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade (2015-2024).”

The Philippines upholds that a robust civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system is a powerful tool in the fight against poverty, social exclusion, and inequality, ensuring that no one is left behind. A well-functioning CRVS system provides an official record of the existence of the person and the recognition before the law granting the individual legal identity. Legal identity is essential and widely-acknowledged to be a catalyst for achieving at least ten of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Civil registration data supports more than 50 SDG indicators. The link between CRVS and sustainable development is simply undeniable.

Towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, the Philippines also reaffirms its commitment to the Regional Action Framework on CRVS as it firmly addresses inequalities related to these systems. As a manifestation of its dedication, the Philippines provided important oversight in the Technical Advisory Group of the Bali Process Civil Registration Assessment Toolkit, which is an important instrument to record all of the births, deaths and marriages that occur in their territory among refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality. Since its publication in 2018, the Toolkit has been deemed effective in increasing registration levels among refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality, in reducing the risk of being
trafficked among these persons, and lastly, in assisting governments in the region to pursue their goal of civil registration and legal identity for all as a central element of building a better future. Thus, we call on our colleagues to also support the move to expand the toolkit to other marginalized and vulnerable populations.

For the Philippine context, several CRVS efforts have been launched in the past years. A civil registration mission was conducted in Sabah to assist the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur in the facilitation of the delayed registration of birth of undocumented Filipinos working in the plantations in Sabah, which totaled to more than 20,000 workers including their families. This endeavor is an example of a multisectoral strategy, which was done in coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs. With the impact of such approach, we hope that our colleagues consider exploring similar strategies to address inequalities related to civil registration and vital statistics. In the celebration of the Civil Registration Month, the Philippines, through the Philippine Statistics Authority, also conducted the National Data Dissemination Forum on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in March of 2020 including a feature presentation on the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade Updates which underlined different topics, challenges in the next half of the CRVS Decade, and the way forward. During the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, the PSA responded to the need for the generation of real-time death statistics from the submission of civil registry documents for strategic decision-making.

Finally, the Philippines recognizes that strengthening civil registration and vital statistics systems in and of itself is part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, it is vital that we continue to exert every effort and use every tool available to us to address the inequalities. We must also continue to invest in the improvement of our CRVS systems which will ultimately lead to sustainable development.