Statement by the Republic of the Philippines

81st Commission Session of the United Nations

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP)

Agenda item 2: Current and emerging policy issues for inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

[658 words, at 5 minutes and 3 seconds (5 minutes allotted per country/speaker)]

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme for this session resonates deeply with our country's vision to achieve a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient society. Today, I will share the key policy challenges we are addressing and our efforts to contribute towards the attainment of shared regional goals.

The Philippines is undergoing rapid urbanization while striving to make cities inclusive and sustainable. Guided by the Philippine Development Plan for 2023-2028, our goal is to create livable communities that provide equitable access to opportunities and robust infrastructure. The *Pambansang Pabahay para sa Pilipino Program*, or the National Housing for Filipinos Program, seeks to address the housing backlog by constructing a minimum of three million housing units by 2028,[1] while the *Build, Better, More* program focuses on improving connectivity and urban

[1] Philippine Star. (2024, November 12). *Gov't on track to meet less than 13% of its housing target by 2028*. https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/11/12/2399617/govt-track-meet-less-13-its-housing-target-2028

mobility through sustainable transport solutions, such as the Metro Manila Subway Project.

As a country vulnerable to climate change, we are taking steps and implementing measures to strengthen resilience and adaptability. Our *National Greening Program* has successfully reforested over two million hectares, contributing to carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation.[2] Additionally, the *Climate Resilient Cities Initiative,* along with the *Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010,* supports local governments in integrating climate adaptation measures, and enhancing disaster preparedness and response within urban development planning.[3]

Sustainable development must leave no one behind. Our goals include reducing poverty incidence to 8.8% by 2028. Initiatives such as the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (Bridging Program for Filipino Families or 4Ps) offer conditional cash transfers to improve health, education, and nutrition outcomes for underprivileged and marginalized families. Furthermore, gender-responsive budgeting and inclusive education reforms, such as the *Alternative Learning System* for out-of-school youth promote and ensure equitable access to opportunities.

We also recognize the transformative power of innovation and ICT. Our *e-Government Master Plan* aims to digitalize public services to enhance efficiency and transparency.[4] We are establishing innovation hubs and

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[2] Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). (n.d.). *Enhanced National Greening Program*. https://denr.gov.ph/priority-program/enhanced-national-greening-program/
[3] Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). (n.d.). *DENR strengthens climate resilience through enhanced greening program*. https://denr.gov.ph/news-events/10123-2/
[4] Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT). (n.d.). *DICT launches e-Government Masterplan to propel national digital transformation*.

fostering partnerships between academia and industry to drive research and development in priority sectors, aiming to elevate our Global Innovation Index ranking to the top 33% by 2028.

Middle-income countries (MICs), which account for 75% of the world's population and one-third of the world's GDP, are formidable champions of sustainable development. However, these nations continue to face development challenges compounded by cross-cutting and multi-dimensional global realities such as climate change, conflict, and displacement.

It is for this reason that the Philippines, as a middle-income country, has tabled a resolution on "*Advancing the Sustainable Development of Middle Income Countries*" during this session. This resolution calls on the UN Development System and the international community to provide tailored support to MICs, leveraging the mandate established by the UN General Assembly Resolution on MICs.

Within this context, we will host the High-Level Conference on Middle-Income Countries next week in Manila. This conference will bring together stakeholders to advance strategic actions and foster regional cooperation in tackling the challenges faced by MICs. It will also highlight the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation as complementary mechanisms to North-South cooperation in building stronger global partnerships.

We highlight the important role of multilateral development banks in working with governments and stakeholders in supporting sustainable

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https://ictstatistics.dict.gov.ph/dict-launches-egovernment-masterplan-to-propel-national-digital-transformation/

development in developing countries, including middle-income countries. This includes finding clear solutions for reducing debt stress and extending concessional financing, among others.

We need to realign our programs and initiatives to address the specific needs and requirements of different countries. This marks a departure from a one-size-fits-all approach, and aligns with the United Nations' call for greater operational efficiency, scalability, and impact.

We commend ESCAP for its initiatives relevant to MICs, which include promoting measures that extend beyond GDP, facilitating resource mobilization, and addressing vulnerabilities. The Commission has contributed significantly to shaping strategies aligned with our developmental goals. We have greatly benefited from ESCAP and its initiatives, which have strengthened our efforts and empowered us in areas such as disaster risk reduction, digital trade integration, and sustainable urban development. We encourage ESCAP to continue its focus on the diverse circumstances of MICs to ensure that progress toward higher-income status is equitable and sustainable.

The Philippines reiterates its commitment to advancing inclusive and sustainable development. We stand ready to work with ESCAP member states in building a future that is resilient, inclusive, and sustainable.

Thank you.