PHILIPPINE STATEMENT

Madame Chair, Excellencies,

The Government of the Philippines reaffirms its unwavering pledge to empower older persons, their families, and their communities. This thrust is in pursuit of our Constitutional mandate and commitment to various international agreements, specifically those embodied in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

In recent years, the population of Filipino older persons (60 years old and above) is steadily growing as a result of the ongoing demographic transition in the country. Hence, their wellbeing has become a critical component of the overall development of the country.

The country has implemented strategic interventions to ensure the wellbeing of older persons and empower them to participate in the development process. The overall strategic actions for the wellbeing and development of older persons are laid out in the Philippine Plan of Action for Senior Citizens (PPASC) for 2019-2022. In terms of policies, Republic Act No. 9994 (Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010) provides privileges such as discounts on goods and services and government assistance; Republic Act No. 11223 (Universal Health Care Act) gives preferential treatment to older persons in the provision and access to necessary and timely health care; Republic Act No. 11350 creates the National Commission on Senior Citizens to ensure the full implementation of laws, policies, and programs of the government pertaining to senior citizens; Republic Act No. 7432 mandates the establishment of the Offices of Senior Citizens Affairs in cities and municipalities to ensure the
implementation of local-level policies and programs for older persons; and *Bayanihan We Heal as One Act* or Republic Act No. 11649 which allowed the local government units to facilitate the distribution of the Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens.

The country has also initiated various interventions to empower the ageing population and support older persons’ participation in income-generating work by institutionalizing support mechanisms and policies such as the Anti-Age Discrimination in Employment Law (Republic Act No. 10911), among others. These policies empower abled senior citizens to continue being productive members of society by participating in stimulating local economy and contribute to national development.

With such initiatives, poverty levels among senior citizens dropped from 14.4% in 2015 to 9.1% in 2018.

However, Filipino older persons still experience functional difficulties and socioeconomic challenges. The 2019 Longitudinal Study of Aging and Health in the Philippines revealed, among others, that almost half of older Filipinos find it most difficult to walk around and leave the house and stand up or sit down; most of them suffer from diagnosed illnesses and are also incapacitated from accessing timely healthcare services. Many older persons also rely on their family and the government for their economic needs. The income sources of senior citizens are 58% from their children, 42% from their pension, and 34% from their savings from work.

Therefore, we will continually enhance our efforts to ensure that they have an enabling and supportive environment that allows them to secure their wellbeing and achieve their aspirations. Among the initiatives we are
pursuing is the finalization of the Social Protection Floor, which highlights programs that guarantee the health care security of senior citizens, as well as the Lifelong Learning program, which includes all learning activities throughout life for the development of competencies and qualifications of senior citizens.

Within the full-devolution policy being implemented in the country, the role of local government units (LGUs) in promoting and protecting the rights and wellbeing of senior citizens has become more prominent. While the platform for more organized interventions for senior citizens is present through the creation and mobilization of the local Office of Senior Citizens Affairs in all LGUs, there remains a significant gap in terms of the implementation of more strategic and sustainable interventions for the wellbeing of older persons primarily because of their limited resources.

As we forge onward with the important work ahead, we remain committed to promote the aspirations of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing within the Philippines and in the Asia Pacific region. We will work with other countries in creating societies that uphold the rights of older persons and empower them to live an independent, healthy, long, and active lives.

Thank you Madame Chair.