

PHILIPPINE COUNTRY STATEMENT

UNCSW64

Dr. Rhodora Masilang-Bucoy
Chairperson, Philippine Commission on Women

Greetings!

The Philippines played a vital role in crafting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. Nearly 25 years since its adoption, the Philippine government remains committed to developing and implementing policies and programs to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, consistent with its vision of a strong, just, peaceful and equal society.

We would like to share with you our achievements and recommendations in the strengthened implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in conjunction with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Philippines has made critical interventions in upholding the reproductive and sexual health rights of women through the provision of comprehensive reproductive health services and universal health care and supporting programs for maternal, neonatal, child health and nutrition in the first 1000 days.

In education, the Philippine government offered free higher education in all state universities and colleges, with majority of the beneficiaries being women. Our successful conditional cash transfer program has also been expanded to provide benefits to homeless street families, indigenous peoples in rural areas, and victims of disasters and armed conflict. To end VAW, the Philippines strengthened mechanisms for victim-survivors through protection programs; intensified the campaign against VAW in multi-media; and implemented anti-VAW laws including anti-trafficking, women migrant workers, domestic workers act and the expanded sexual harassment law or the Safe Spaces Act. The Safe Spaces Act is a ground-breaking law that provides protective

measures against gender-based sexual harassment in public spaces, including in streets and alleys, schools, malls, public transportation, workplaces, online spaces and all other areas openly accessible to or offered to be accessed by the public.

Noting that there are persisting challenges in achieving GEWE in the Asia-Pacific region, the Philippine government proposes the following recommendations:

1. To pursue our vision for inclusive development, eradicate poverty and uplift the condition of marginalized women especially IPs, PWDs, and those in rural areas.
2. To ensure women's access to decent work, improved wages and social protection, develop a harmonized definition of the informal economy and come up with appropriate policies, programs and services on unpaid care and domestic work. We recommend the transition from informal to formal sector to protect workers and businesses and sustain economic gains.
3. To prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against all women and girls in public and private spheres, online and offline, intensify efforts against harmful stereotypes and negative social norms in schools, media, business enterprises, police, judiciary, parliaments and other institutions.
4. To achieve gender balance in decision-making positions, (a) broaden the political participation of women through a gender-responsive, inclusive, participatory and non-discriminatory electoral process; and (b) increase national investments in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls through gender-responsive budgeting.
5. To improve women's and girls' access to public services, especially in times of conflict and emergency, identify and remove barriers to access through a strong social protection framework that reduces poverty and vulnerability to risks.
6. To protect the human rights of women migrant workers, trafficking victims, and women with disabilities, promote bilateral and multilateral strategies.
7. To accelerate the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, increase the meaningful participation of women in conflict resolutions and peace building, consistent

with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and 1820, and CEDAW General Recommendation 30 on ensuring women's human rights "before, during and after various conflict contexts and to the expansion of women's role in the peace process and conflict transformation."

8. To support women's and girls' resilience and adaptive capacities to respond and recover from the adverse impacts of climate change, adopt and implement gender-responsive strategies on climate change adaptation and mitigation. There is also a need to promote equal access to essential infrastructure and climate-smart agriculture technology, clean energy, appropriate financing and technology and other relevant interventions that seek to empower all women and girls to become resilient.

Twenty-five years after, the implementation of the BPfA is further put to test with the global escalation of COVID-19. In these uncertain times, ensuring that government response to this ongoing health and economic crisis is inclusive and gender-responsive is not only necessary but life-saving. Some gender issues that must be addressed are: (1) the increased prevalence of violence against women and children due to quarantine/ stay-at-home/movement restriction policies; (2) the disproportionate risk of infection that women face as they take up majority of the health and service workforce at the frontlines; and (3) the adverse economic effects on women from loss of livelihood, especially in the informal economy.

The Philippines looks forward to stronger collective action in the furtherance of BPfA implementation, in more normal times and during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the realization of our 2030 Sustainable Development Goals for gender equality and women empowerment.