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**31st Session of the Human Rights Council**

**OPENING STATEMENT FOR THE PANEL DISCUSSION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE RIGHT TO HEALTH: PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE, INITIATIVES, AND WAY FORWARD**

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HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT CHOI KYONGLIM; UNITED NATIONS DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, MS. KATE GILMORE; DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, DR. MARGARET CHAN; EXCELLENCIES; LADIES AND GENTLEMEN; A PLEASANT MORNING.

THE 21ST CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (COP21) AGREEMENT IS A BREAKTHROUGH IN HISTORY AS IT TOOK DECADES OF NEGOTIATIONS TO ARRIVE AT A COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT IN MAKING OUR PLANET A HEALTHIER PLACE TO LIVE IN. IT MAY STILL FALL SHORT OF OTHERS’ EXPECTATIONS BUT I BELIEVE WE ARE OFF TO A GOOD START.

CLIMATE CHANGE HAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED THE HEALTH OF FILIPINOS IN TANGIBLE WAYS – IN THE RESULTING HEALTH LOSSES DUE TO AN INCREASING NUMBER OF DEVASTATING EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS, AND IN THE SHIFTING PATTERNS OF CLIMATE SENSITIVE DISEASES. AFTER THE MASSIVE FLOODING BROUGHT ABOUT BY TROPICAL STORM KETSANA AND TYPHOON PARMA IN 2009, THE NUMBER OF LEPTOSPIROSIS CASES ROSE DRAMATICALLY – UP TO 5 TIMES MORE THAN ITS INCIDENCE IN 2008. DENGUE HAS ALSO CONTINUALLY PLAGUED THE COUNTRY WITH AN OVERALL INCREASE IN INCIDENCE OVER TIME, WITH FLUCTUATING INCIDENCE PUNCTUATED BY EPIDEMICS.

THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE DURING THE SUPER TYPHOON HAIYAN IN 2013, ONE OF THE STRONGEST TROPICAL CYCLONES IN RECORDED HISTORY, HIGHLIGHTS THE CAPACITY OF GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE TO WIPE OUT HEALTH SECTOR GAINS AND INFLICT CATASTROPHIC LOSSES OF LIFE, LIMB, AND PROPERTIES.

NATURAL DISASTERS WHICH HIT OUR COUNTRY IN SUCCESSION PUSHED OUR HEALTH SYSTEM TO THE BRINK AND MADE US REALIZE THE URGENT NEED FOR COLLECTIVE SUPPORT MEASURES WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE HEALTH SECTOR TO ADDRESS THE EFFECTS OF GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE.

INTER ISLAND AND REGIONAL CONTINGENT NETWORKS, PLANNED WAY BEFORE AS DISASTER MANAGEMENT PLANS, FILLED THE IMMEDIATE NEEDS FOR RESCUE, MEDICAL ATTENDANCE OF PATIENTS, AND GAVE RESPITE TO HEALTH WORKERS WHO WERE THEMSELVES VICTIMS. LET ME SHARE BRIEFLY HOW WE HAVE MOVED FORWARD.

THE 2013-2015 PHILIPPINE NATIONAL PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HYOGO FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION SHOWED THAT APPROPRIATE HEALTH POLICIES, TECHNICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES AND MECHANISMS FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT, WITH A PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, ARE IN PLACE.

WITH THE HELP OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, THE PHILIPPINES MOVED FORWARD NOT ONLY IN DISASTER RESPONSE, BUT MORE CRUCIALLY, IN BUILDING BACK BETTER FOR A MORE RESILIENT HEALTH SYSTEM.

EFFICIENT AND TIMELY COMMUNICATION SYSTEM WAS EQUALLY IMPORTANT. IN THIS REGARD, THE SURVEILLANCE IN POST EXTREME EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS (SPEED) WAS CONCEPTUALIZED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) TO PROVIDE REAL-TIME INFORMATION ON HEALTH AFTER DISASTER.

OUR EMERGENCY RESPONSE BECAME MORE COMPREHENSIVE COVERING A BROAD RANGE OF PROGRAMS, INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT. WE HAVE DEPLOYED MORE HEALTH WORKERS, DEVELOPING COMPETENT AND COMPASSIONATE HEALTH WORKFORCE. MINIMUM INITIAL SERVICE PACKAGE (MISP) FOR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (SRH) WAS PROVIDED TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN AT THE EARLY STAGES OF CRISES.

FOR OUR REHABILITATION EFFORTS, WE HAVE STRENGTHENED DISABILITY REFERRAL SYSTEM, IMPLEMENTED COMMUNITY-BASED REHABILITATION SERVICE, AND TRAINED NON-SPECIALIST DOCTORS AND NURSES ON DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SERVICES AT THE PRIMARY HEALTH CARE LEVEL. THIS IS IN CONSONANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION ADOPTED IN THE NATIONAL POLICY ON CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION FOR THE HEALTH SECTOR (AND ITS OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES) IN 2012.

SPECIFIC PHILIPPINE SOCIAL PROTECTION MEASURES INCLUDE “EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE, PRICE SUBSIDIES, FOOD PROGRAMS, EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS, RETRAINING PROGRAMS AND EMERGENCY LOANS”[[1]](#footnote-1) FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS INCLUDING THE MARGINALIZED AND POVERTY-RISK GROUPS. MORE RECENT EFFORT WAS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2014-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN (THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH) IN ORDER TO “PROTECT THE HEALTH OF FILIPINOS WITH PRIORITY GIVEN TO THOSE LIVING IN VULNERABLE AREAS FROM THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE.” ALL THESE WITH THE GOAL OF PROMOTING AND ENSURING THE RIGHT TO HEALTH OF ALL PEOPLE.

BUT CRUCIAL TO OUR “BUILD, BACK, BETTER” STRATEGY WAS THE CONSTRUCTION OF STRONGER HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURES: RECONSTRUCTION IN “AREAS THAT ARE LESS PRONE TO STORM SURGE”[[2]](#footnote-2) AND HOSPITALS AS LAST FACILITY STANDING AND AS SAFE HAVENS – HUBS FOR ENERGY, WATER, LOGISTICS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND SHELTER NEEDS OF THE AFFECTED POPULATION. HOSPITAL COMPOUND SHOULD HAVE A SENSIBLE AREA TO PROVIDE A SECURE SHELTER FOR THE TYPHOON/DISASTER VICTIMS WITH THE CAPABILITY FOR EMERGENCY AND PROVISION OF WATER AND ENERGY IN SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES.

THROUGH AN INTERAGENCY EFFORT, A CIRCULAR WAS ISSUED IN NOVEMBER 2015 FORMALIZING THE MENTIONED INITIATIVES AND DEFINING “LOW, MODERATE AND HIGH HAZARD ZONES, AND AGREED ON IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES FOR HAZARD MAPPING”. BEYOND DISASTER-RESPONSE, THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HAS COLLABORATED FOR THE NATIONAL GREENING PROGRAM (NGP) WITH THE END GOAL OF PROTECTING HEALTH AMIDST CLIMATE CHANGE. MORE RECENTLY, PHILIPPINE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PLAN FOR 2017-2022 WAS ALSO FORMULATED BY THE DEPARTMENTS/MINISTRIES OF ENERGY, TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY AND OTHERS—MINDFUL OF THE FACT THAT AIR POLLUTION AND ITS HAZARDOUS EFFECTS GO BEYOND THE HEALTH SECTOR.

AS THE CURRENT CHAIR OF THE CLIMATE VULNERABLE FORUM, WE CALL ON YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT, COOPERATION, AND SOLIDARITY IN THE FINANCIAL, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS OF CLIMATE RESPONSE—SECURING ABOUT $100 BILLION FINANCING NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY PRIOR TO 2020 FOR FAST-TRACKED CLIMATE PROTECTION[[3]](#footnote-3) AND ENSURING THE PROVISION OF UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE (UHC) FOR ALL INCLUDING MARGINALIZED, INDIGENOUS, AND POVERTY-RISK GROUPS; SPECIFICALLY, AS WE ALL MOVE FORWARD TO ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS). ALL OF US HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY.

RIGHT TO HEALTH WILL REQUIRE GOVERNMENTS, CIVIL SOCIETY, PRIVATE SECTOR, INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS, AND EACH INDIVIDUAL (YOU AND ME) TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND CONTRIBUTE TO ITS SUSTAINABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT. WE ALL HAVE TO STRIVE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PRESENT IN CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE GENERATIONS.

THANK YOU.

1. Retrieved from http://www.nscb.gov.ph/ncs/12thncs/papers/INVITED/IPS-09%20Social%20Protection%20Statistics/IPS-09\_3%20The%20Philippine%20Social%20Protection%20Framework%20and%20Strategy\_An%20Overview.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Sherwood, et al. (2015). *Resolving Post-Disaster Displacement: Insights from the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda)*. Retrieved from http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/brookings\_haiyan\_report.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sec. Purisima’s Opening Remarks (2015). Retrieved from http://www.thecvf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Hon.-Cesar-V.-Purisima%E2%80%99s-Opening-Remarks.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)