



PHILIPPINES

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement delivered by
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the Philippines

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Mr. Chair,

The care and concern for the elderly have always been fundamental Filipino values. These values are enshrined in our Constitution, which vests in the family the duty to care for its elderly members and in the State the duty to provide for their needs through social security programs. The State groups the elderly among the more vulnerable sectors of society, along with the underprivileged, sick, disabled, women and children, who are entitled to protection and priority in meeting their needs.

Last year, in an effort to enhance the social protection network for older persons, the Philippines amended the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010 to provide health insurance coverage to all Filipino citizens 60 years old and older (referred to as senior citizens), with the national government fully subsidizing premium payments under the National Health Insurance Program administered by Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (Philhealth). There are approximately 6.1 million senior citizens in the Philippines today. Prior to the amendment of the law, only 3.94 million senior citizens were covered by Philhealth. With the signing of the new law, the remaining 2.16 million senior citizens now have insurance coverage.

An additional benefit for indigent senior citizens 65 years old and older who are frail, sickly, disabled and do not have a regular income, pension plan, or support from any member of the family is a monthly stipend to augment their daily subsistence and medical needs.

An important feature of the special pension for indigent elders is its employment of the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction. It employs a scientifically formulated uniform set of criteria for identifying poor families in the country producing a high quality database. Inclusion of non-poor or exclusion of the poor in social protection services is reduced.

Mr. Chair,

At the institutional level, the Philippines' Department of Social Welfare and Development provides regulatory services, setting standards, registering, licensing, accrediting, and providing consultative services to organizations engaged in social welfare and development activities, including Senior Citizen Centers. This regulatory function of the Department enables non-government organizations and local government units to achieve and maintain standards for social welfare and development programs and services. It also ensures that the disadvantaged individuals, including senior citizens, receive quality services in a non-discriminatory fashion. The regulatory services, with an established Quality Management System in the delivery of services, were certified last August 2014 in accordance with ISO Certification 9001:2008.

I am pleased to inform everyone that there is a strong collaboration among senior citizens, government, private sector and civil society organizations in efforts to provide for the needs of our elderly. The engagement is in all areas of work, be it at the policy, advocacy, program, project, services and decision-making levels. To illustrate this, a multi-stakeholder meeting involving key government agencies, human rights institutions and civil society organizations working for and comprised of older persons was recently organized to assess the situation of older persons in the country. They utilized applicable human rights standards in their analysis and gained a common understanding of their roles in the different levels of community life.

Well aware of the growing number of senior citizens, the Philippines formulated an Action Plan for 2012-2016 with the following objectives: "promote active ageing, provide social protection and promote the rights and welfare of senior citizens and their empowerment."

This Action Plan is aligned with our MDG commitments and the 2012 Bangkok Statement on the Asia-Pacific Review of the Implementation of the Madrid International

Plan of Action on Ageing. It builds on achievements of the previous plan implemented from 2006-2010.

To achieve its goals, the Plan pursues three (3) strategies, namely: mainstreaming the concerns of senior citizens into development policies, plans and programs; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring an enabling and supportive environment.

Mr. Chair,

As older persons face distinct social, legal, institutional and other challenges to the full enjoyment of their rights, we recognize that critical gaps and challenges exist. There is a need to articulate how each human right specifically applies to older people. There is difficulty in defining what constitutes abuse of older persons. There is a lack of data on older persons. In addressing these, we believe that national and regional frameworks should be complemented by multilateral initiatives. The normative, implementation and information gaps in the international protection system for older persons highlight the need for an international legal instrument for older persons. This instrument will frame older persons' rights as an integral part of the broader international human rights agenda and importantly, codify older persons' rights in international law.

As we near the adoption of a new development agenda, we must underscore the importance of mainstreaming the rights of those who are invisible. In this regard, the Philippines conveys its support for the possible elaboration of a legally binding instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons.

The Philippines remains steadfast in initiating various programs and services that aim to promote the welfare and rights of the elderly and is committed to providing social protection for older persons.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.