Mr. Chair,

The Philippines supports the CPD 2019-2023 which is aligned with the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 and our vision to achieve a country without poverty, “Ambisyon Natin 2040,” Our Ambition 2040.

We extend our gratitude to Ms. Karin Hulshof and her team. The consultations they conducted made sure that the priorities in the CPD were nationally-determined.

The CPD fully supports the Sustainable Development Goals. The core of Agenda 2030 — NO ONE BE LEFT BEHIND — is entrenched in the program which focuses on the rights of the country’s estimated 12 million poor children.

More than half of the 101 million Filipinos are under 25 years old. Child-focused interventions and policies are thus crucial. Children and the youth will be both drivers and beneficiaries of the country’s growth.
We acknowledge the work undertaken with UNICEF to address current crises such as online violence against children, the situation of children in disasters, and that of children in Mindanao; although a great stride has been made with the adoption of the Bangsa Moro Law, the military is at the forefront of protecting the welfare of the children in armed conflict.

More than half of the Philippine population are now online. As of 2017, we have more than 67 million internet users; almost half of the children claimed to have experienced cyber violence; 25% were shown videos/photos of sexual activities; and 29% received sexual messages... This is immoral! There is no social or economic reason for its widespread existence other than the sheer evil of the perpetrators. In many cases, the parents are the exploiters. Within this context, we fully support the National Study on Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children undertaken by UNICEF and its recommended solutions.

On children in disasters, UNICEF has forged partnerships with local governments in making evacuation centers child-friendly and gender-sensitive.

On children in conflict-areas in Mindanao, we count on the continued support of UNICEF in protecting the welfare of children in armed conflict. We recognize UNICEF’s intervention in disengaging child soldiers from the MILF.

As a former member of the Philippine Congress, I founded and headed the Committee for the Welfare of Children. I chair the Golden Rooster Foundation which I founded initially to help the fallen soldiers’ children, and which I now use to promote children’s rights and child welfare. I also co-authored the Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009 and established the AMOR
Village. The AMOR Village is a centre for children with special needs, the disabled and mentally-challenged. I am especially proud of this endeavour, as it continues to thrive 10 years after its initial establishment, which I consider as a successful blueprint for a sustainable intervention in child welfare.

We are confident that this new CPD will further strengthen the partnership between the Philippines and UNICEF.

In November, we will mark our 70th year of partnership. To make this milestone a truly memorable one, we must make a decisive impact on the lives of the Filipino children that will create a legacy which will be espoused by all Filipinos for generations to come.

Thank you, Chair.