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*Third and Fourth Consolidated Report of the Government of the Philippines on the
Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

52nd Session of the UNITED NATIONS: Committee on the Rights of the Child

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Distinguished Chairperson and Members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, representatives from various UN Agencies, International Bodies, and NGOs, ladies and gentlemen, good morning!

Ladies and Gentlemen, as Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and concurrent Chairperson of the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), it is my distinct honor and privilege to lead the Philippine delegation in this dialogue with the Committee on the country's Third and Fourth Consolidated Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2001- 2007).

We wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the important role of the Committee in promoting and protecting the rights of children in all parts of the world. In support of the work of the Committee, the Philippines traditionally earmarks a modest contribution to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for use of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Foremost, I wish to highlight some of our country's accomplishments included in the third and fourth consolidated report. There are six laws on child protection enacted, namely:

In 2003, two (2) child protection laws namely the Anti-trafficking in Persons Act or RA 9208 and The Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor Act or RA 9231 were enacted. The anti-trafficking in persons act legislated policies to eliminate trafficking in persons especially women and children. It also establishes institutional mechanisms for the protection and support of trafficked persons and provides penalties for its violation. The Anti- Child Labor Act provides for stronger measures to protect working children and has amended anti-child labor provisions of earlier laws. The same law has given way to the development of advocacy measures addressing the six worst forms of child labor and programs giving opportunities for education for working and at risk children and livelihood generation for these childrens' families.

In 2004, three child rights protection laws were enacted namely an Act Allowing Illegitimate Children to Use the Surname of their Father or RA 9255; the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act or RA 9262 and the Newborn Screening Act or RA 9288. RA 9255 allows children born out of wedlock to use the surname of their father if their filiation is expressly recognized by the father. The same law spares illegitimate children the shame and stigma attached to their status as this amends Article 176 of the 1987 Family Code which prescribes that children born out of wedlock should use the surname of their mother. RA 9262, on the other hand, protects women and children from physical, emotional, sexual, psychological and economic

abuses. This law penalizes men with imprisonment if they are found to have committed acts of violence against their wives or partners. RA 9288 or the Newborn Screening Act of 2004 ensures, among others, that parents recognize their responsibility in promoting their child's right to health and full development by protecting their child from preventable causes of disability and death through newborn screening.

The Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006 or RA 9344 prohibits torture and other cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, introduces restorative justice, provides for diversion programs for children in conflict with the law and exempts erring children aged 15 years and below from criminal liability.

The passage of RA 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997, was followed major breakthroughs in policy development and implementation such as the inclusion of IPs/ICCs in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) and the Delineation and awarding of 145 Certificates of Ancestral Domains Titles covering over 3 million hectares and 312 Certificates of Ancestral Land Titles (CALTs) covering more than 12,000 hectares benefitting 763,298 indigenous peoples. This program has in a way abated the effects of land loss and degradation on children of indigenous people's development, health and survival.

We have discussed the different programs of collaboration for child rights promotion and protection in the consolidated report. We wish to mention that timely birth registration is one challenge that the National Statistics Office (NSO) and Plan Philippines have addressed in their Unregistered Children Project (UCP) in 2000-2004 and the Birth

Registration Project (BRP) in 2004-2007. These projects have established the *Barangay* or Village Civil Registration System as a grassroots mechanism to facilitate and sustain 100% birth registration in 127 municipalities in the 17 regions in the country.

The Philippines is also the first country in East Asia to adopt a Strategic Framework and a Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children (VAC). A national network to end Violence Against Children has been organized to see to the operationalization of this plan of action. Relatedly, a Child Rights Network (CRN) jointly convened by CWC and Plan Philippines has been formed to advocate the passage of laws that are harmonized with the CRC. An organization of legislators called the Philippine Legislators' Committee for Population and Development (PLCPD) acts as secretariat to the CRN.

The Committee's additional questions have facilitated our updating of information especially on the issues raised covering 2007 to 2009 data. I am pleased to present some updates on the said report and some highlights of responses from the various cooperating agencies of government.

Madame Chairperson,

The years 2007-2009 have been periods where we, as a nation, made great strides in terms of policies (both legislative and administrative) as well as programmatic action and budgetary allocations for children. We had three (3) laws enacted benefiting children during the period. Directly benefiting children by expediting the adoption process is Republic Act No. 9523, an Act that Requires the Certification of the

DSWD to Declare a Child Legally Available for Adoption as a Prerequisite for Adoption Proceedings (such certification required court action before said law was enacted). Two other laws that have provisions benefiting children are RA 9442 of 2007 otherwise known as the "Magna Carta for Persons with Disability as amended" and for "Granting Additional Privileges and Incentives and Prohibitions on Verbal, Non-Verbal Ridicule and Vilification Against Persons with Disability". Last 14 August 2009, the Magna Carta of Women of 2009 (RA 9710) was enacted with provisions for the protection of girl children through the elimination of all forms of discrimination in education, health, nutrition and skills development particularly of Moro and indigenous peoples'/indigenous cultural communities' children. Three (3) other laws are expected to be enacted before the end of the year as the same are now in final bi-cameral conference committee action. These bills are the anti-torture, anti child-pornography and legitimation of children born of underage parents.

The Presidential Human Rights Committee (PHRC) was strengthened in December 2006 with its expanded functions and the transfer of its Chairmanship from the Secretary of Justice to the Executive Secretary. The new PHRC structure identifies lead agencies to monitor compliance to eight core international covenants. DSWD is the lead agency for the CRC.

One newly implemented program that helps fulfill the country's commitment to meet the Millennium Development Goals to eradicate poverty, achieve universal primary education, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and promote gender equality is the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) which has an annual budget of Php10

billion or US\$208 Million to benefit 700,000 poor households. There is a recent presidential directive to increase beneficiaries to 1 million and to provide an additional annual budget of US\$ 104 million.

The Accelerated Hunger Mitigation Program (AHMP) is a medium to long term program of government to address hunger. It intervenes in both the supply side or food production and the demand side or the means of people to obtain sufficient food. The proportion of underweight children was reduced from 32% (1998) to 26% (2008) in a big part due to this program.

In terms of Official Development Assistance (ODA) the MDG-F United Nations Steering Committee approved US\$ 3.5 Million for children, food security and malnutrition in August 2009. This UN joint program seeks to increase exclusive breastfeeding rate by at least 20 percent annually, reduce prevalence of under nutrition by at least 3 percent in children 6-24 months old by 2010 and improve capacities of national and local government and stakeholders to formulate, promote and implement policies and programs on infant and young child feeding.

Madame Chairperson,

The National Demographic and Health Survey (2003-2008) reported a decrease in Infant Mortality Rate from 35 in 1998 to 25 /1000 in 2008 live births. The Under-Five mortality decreased from 48 to 34 /1000 live births in the same 10-year period. The same survey reported increase in fully immunized children from 70 in 2003 to 80% in 2008. Increases in BCG, 1st DPT and 1st Polio doses have been reported and

measles vaccination rate increased from 80% to 84% in the same reference years. The Department of Health also reports that Newborn Screening tests are now included in the Newborn Care Package of Phil Health (the National Health Insurance Program) together with immunizations and other interventions.

The Department of Education's participation and achievement rates increased both in the elementary and secondary levels from SY 2007-08 to SY 2008-09. Cohort Survival Rate for elementary increased in the same reference years.

The Philippine government's child rights advocacy campaign dubbed as Bright Child has been a continuing undertaking since 2004. The Bright Child Campaign has been adopted and disseminated not only through tri-media but also through community theater shows that covered 20 cities and 106 municipalities in Luzon reaching 250,000 parents and children. Nationwide, Children's Month celebrations from 2004-2009 had the Bright Child in the themes covering various areas of child rights.

Our child participation initiative, the ASEAN Children's Forum has been endorsed by the ASEAN Senior Officials to the ASEAN Ministers of Social Welfare and Development. As we were preparing for this Dialogue, we held our National Children's Conference (NCC) participated in by over eighty (80) child leaders coming from various provinces and cities to discuss their situation and raise priority issues and recommendations for action by duty-bearers and stakeholders.

At the United Nations, the Philippines spearheads General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions and initiatives on combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The Philippines is likewise a main co-sponsor of initiatives on the human rights of migrants and their families, including migrant children; human rights of disabled persons; extreme poverty and human rights; the human rights implications of climate change; and human rights education and training for primary and secondary education, as well as for higher education and professional training.

The government of the Philippines recognizes the need to improve on its implementation of laws and child related programs. In response to Part I No.13 issue to “indicate the issues affecting children that the State party considers to be priorities requiring the most urgent attention with regard to the implementation of the Convention”, in addition to those earlier identified, child protection issues came up as priorities aside from the need to have more functional mechanisms with adequate resources allocation and updated data bank on children.

With regard to Part III No. 5b on children in conflict with the law who have been convicted for a criminal offense and the sanction offender has been sentenced to, there are a total of 440 convicted CICL as of 14 September 2009, 61 of whom are diverted to DSWD, 16 are detained with the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, 347 are with the Bureau of Correction, 2 are with the Manila Youth Reception Center and 14 are with the NGOs.

One noteworthy development on the issue of child soldiers and children involved in armed conflict is the forging and adoption of an agreement between UNICEF/UN Country Team and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on the demobilization of child soldiers. This is in fulfillment of an earlier commitment of the MILF leadership to the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) on Children In Armed Conflict, Madam Radhika Coomaraswamy on her visit to the country in December 2008.

Distinguished Chairperson and Members of the Committee, we have submitted our 3rd and 4th Consolidated Report and our responses to the list of issues raised by the Committee. We shall be pleased to respond to your questions and observations. We look forward to a fruitful interactive dialogue with the distinguished Committee members today.

Thank you and a pleasant day to all!

