

OPENING STATEMENT

Distinguished Chairman and Members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, representatives from various UN agencies, International Bodies, NGO- Observers, ladies and gentlemen good morning! First of all, let me introduce to you the members of the Philippine Delegation:

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my distinct honor and privilege to lead the Philippine delegation as Executive Director of the Council for the Welfare of Children in presenting the responses to the additional questions which the Committee sent us after reviewing the country's Second Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1995 – 2000). We are happy to note that the Committee's questions facilitated our work in updating our report to cover the third one that was due in 2003. Using the Macro Monitoring System which was developed and put in place in 2001- 2003, we are presenting to you with pride, the administrative as well as latest official survey data in response to your Part I questions. Though pressed for time, we have gathered the needed data and information in less than two months. Our apologies for the inconvenience that resulted to our not being able to submit on 6 April 2005, the initial deadline set by the Committee.

The years 2001-2004 have been most challenging for our country, as this period was the second half of deposed President Estrada's Administration that was assumed by then Vice-President and now present president, Gloria

Macapagal-Arroyo. During this period, several important legislations have been enacted:

- The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (RA9208 of 2004)
- An Act Prohibiting Employment of Children in Hazardous Areas (RA 9231)
- The Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004
- The Newborn Screening Act
- Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002
- An Act Providing Illegitimate Children the Right to Use the Surname of their Father (RA9255)

The Philippines, as most developing countries, has experienced the benefits and adversities of a globalized economy. While trade and investment have increased, we have also faced rising crude oil prices, transportation fare increases, rising cost of utilities and other basic goods. Through all these, we have managed to keep our head above water and "sail on". Our children have been remarkably resilient given all these natural as well as man-made disasters that we went through in particular localities or as a nation.

You can see from our report that we are strong in legislations. We have constantly been working closely with our legislators and their staff. Harmonization of our laws with the CRC has constantly been our guide in setting our legislative agenda for children. However, our bill on the Comprehensive Juvenile Justice System (CJJS) has remained a bill these past 3 congresses. But we are now getting positive signals from Congress after the Committee on Justice at the House of Representatives has approved it.

We have high hopes that the CJJS Law will be approved before 2007 or before the end of the current 13th Congress.

We have been operating on a devolved set-up where local governments take charge of the provision of basic services to the population. Our constant challenge at the national level is strengthening the coordination among agencies and local government units as well as capacity- building of local government functionaries especially the service providers. We therefore need to ensure the integration of Child21 (framework for plan development for children for 25 years which follows the life-cycle and rights based approach), the Early Child Care and Development program, and the provision of the needed funds for basic services. We also employ focused targeting in the delivery of services for children.

Programs and projects are implemented in partnership with the local governments and with NGOs and the communities especially in areas where there are disparities in child rights indicators. We have been holding advocacy and planning sessions with local governments to ensure that goals and targets are synchronized with the Millennium Development Goals and the World Fit for Children goals. We are happy to point out that we have covered 34 (or 43%) of the 79 provinces that already integrated Child21 in their Local Development Plans for Children, 16 have enacted a Child Welfare Code and quite a number of them have even made their State of the Children Report. These developments have improved efforts in promoting child-friendly governance.

The government has also scaled up the implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)

Program prioritizing areas with high malnutrition and school dropout rates.

Efforts to promote and implement child rights have expanded to non-traditional partners like the inter-faith groups, media and the private sector. Child participation in the Philippines has also reached a new level with child and youth representations in the Council for the Welfare of Children as well as in the National Anti-Poverty Commission, and in regional and sub-regional levels.

A more recent initiative of government is the Bright Child campaign that stresses convergence of interventions along the areas of health and nutrition, education and psychosocial development of children. It is a comprehensive and integrated approach in the delivery of basic services for children.

Distinguished Chairman and Members of the Committee, we have submitted our Second Periodic Report and our responses to the list of issues raised by the Committee. We are now ready to respond to any questions or observations.

Thank You and Good Day!

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