

**69<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of the  
High Commissioner's Programme  
01 to 05 October 2018 | Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations  
Geneva, Switzerland**

## **PHILIPPINE STATEMENT**

**H.E. EVAN P. GARCIA  
Permanent Representative of the Philippine Mission to the United Nations  
and Other International Organizations**

Madame Chairman,  
High Commissioner,  
Excellencies, Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Philippines joins fellow delegations in extending our appreciation to the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, for his resolute commitment in addressing the plight of refugees worldwide. Our delegation also lauds and salutes the UNHCR for many advances it has made, together with States and with partners, in pursuing protection and solutions in this context. More importantly, we welcome UNHCR's important role in the process of developing the global compact on refugees.

We express our deep concern with the recurrent and protracted displacement crises that continue to this day, including the unprecedented levels of humanitarian funding needed brought about by the continuing gap between needs and humanitarian funding.

Given the current situation, the international community needs indeed to underline the centrality of international cooperation to the refugee protection regime.

The Philippines remains strongly committed to provide humanitarian assistance and protection for the purpose of alleviating the plight of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons. To demonstrate our efforts, in October 2017, the country signed an Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC) Agreement on the Protection of Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Stateless Persons in the Philippines. The agreement provides the basis for institutionalizing the mechanisms in providing assistance and services to asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons in the country.

Member agencies of this Steering Committee formed clusters according to the services that each government agency could provide to Persons of Concern or POCs. These clusters are on status determination and coordination, documentation, welfare assistance and health, education and skills training, employment and livelihood and legal assistance and durable solutions. Continuing discussions on the parameters of the service clusters demonstrate our serious commitment to provide gender responsive, culture sensitive, and child-friendly services to POCs. Ultimately, institutionalization of policies is a means to improve their access to rights and services and to create a more favorable protection environment for them.

The Philippines also continues to issue International Civil Aviation Organization-compliant Machine Readable Convention Travel Documents (MRCTDs) to recognized refugees and stateless persons. To further fulfill the Philippine's commitment to primarily provide protection to refugees and stateless persons in the country, we have extended the validity of the MRCTDs from two to five years.

The Philippines also launched its National Action Plan (NAP) to End Statelessness on 24 November 2017. It is a framework of seven (7) Action Points which the Government of the Philippines has committed to implement until the year 2024. The goal of the NAP is to end statelessness in the Philippines, and among persons of Filipino descent in migration settings. The action points are geared towards 1) resolving existing situations of statelessness, 2) preventing new cases from emerging, and 3) better identifying and protecting stateless populations.

The National Action Plan consists of the following Action Points:

1. Resolve existing cases of Statelessness
2. Ensure no child is born stateless
3. Remove gender discrimination from nationality laws
4. Grant protection status and facilitate the naturalization of refugees and stateless persons
5. Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness
6. Accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions
7. Improve quantitative and qualitative data on Stateless populations

We also continue to do our share of protection by implementing the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM), a cooperation agreement we have with the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration that allows for the immediate evacuation of refugees who are at risk of *refoulement* and persecution. The Philippines is the first in Asia to have this mechanism.

The Philippines also supports UNHCR's operations through funding contributions.

At the global level, we remain actively engaged as a Steering Member of the Platform for Disaster Displacement (PDD) and together with other States we work towards enhanced cooperation and action to improve protection of disaster displaced persons.

Alleviating the humanitarian and safety concerns of persons is a fundamental foreign policy pillar of the Philippines for its nationals, particularly in countries affected by conflict where our nationals may be. We therefore reiterate that we are deeply committed to the refugee and statelessness conventions and we stand with UNHCR and other States in working towards providing the appropriate measures of addressing the plight of refugees worldwide. END