

FINAL STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

Global Refugee Forum

17-18 December 2019 | Palais Des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Mister/Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Colleagues, good afternoon.

The Philippines has a long history of taking in refugees no questions asked, stretching back to 1920s with the first White Russians fleeing the Red Revolution in Russia, on to Jews fleeing the Europe-wide Holocaust; then Spanish Republicans fleeing the Fascist victory in the Spanish Civil War; then Chinese Nationalists, along with more White Russians fleeing the Red victory in China. This was followed by waves of Vietnamese fleeing the American debacle in Vietnam, then Iranians fleeing the chaotic fall of the corrupt Shah in Iran, followed by more Cambodians fleeing the Communist killings fields of their country. Most recently the offer to take in Rohingya fleeing Rakhine state in Myanmar made by two successive administrations. The Philippines continues to uphold this humanitarian tradition through support for international efforts, including our work on the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and participation in this first Global Refugee Forum.

With the support of UNHCR, with which we work closely, our network of partners in refugee protection has expanded enormously since the Government took full responsibility over asylum and protection mechanisms in the country in 1998. Nonetheless, the Philippines acknowledges that there is still a lot that can be done to support the plight of asylum seekers and refugees.

With this, the Philippines expresses its commitment to achieve the following:

- a. In terms of protecting refugees, we will further enhance our policy, legal, and operational framework for refugees to ensure their full access to rights as guaranteed by the 1951 Convention, including their naturalization and other rights as may be provided by national laws;

- b. In terms of responsibility-sharing, we will contribute more to humanitarian funding for refugee response;
- c. In terms of solutions, the Philippines will continue implementing the emergency transit mechanism (ETM)¹ in cooperation with the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Philippines will explore complementary pathways for admitting refugees with the support of the Complementary Pathways Initiative; and lastly,
- d. In terms of jobs and livelihoods, we will strengthen public-private partnerships for skills and livelihood training for refugees in country.

With the rest of the civilized world, the Philippines shares its unwavering commitment to attain a world that respects the rights of every individual with or without a country because we are all citizens of humanity.

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¹ This mechanism allows refugees in need of immediate protection to temporarily transit in the Philippines prior to resettlement in another country. In 2009, the Philippines, UNHCR, and IOM signed an agreement to establish an ETM. Currently, the ETM in the Philippines can handle up to 50 refugees each year.