



PHILIPPINES

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement delivered by
HON. REYNALDO A. CATAPANG
Assistant Secretary
Office of Migrant Workers Affairs
Department of Foreign Affairs

**On The High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly
on the Appraisal of the
United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons
United Nations Headquarters, New York, 27-28 September 2017**

Mr. President,

Trafficking in persons is a heinous crime that victimizes the most vulnerable members of society. As we come together to examine our efforts guided by the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the 2030 Agenda, let us reaffirm our resolve to assist and protect the victims, prosecute and punish the perpetrators and end its occurrence.

Over 10 million Filipinos work outside of the Philippines. With that number being approximately 10 percent of our population; it is imperative for us to provide a mantle of protection for our Filipino migrants. The Philippines has established a comprehensive mechanism to protect them based upon a framework of laws, regulations, policies, programs and institutions using a migrant-centered approach to the entire migration cycle - from pre-employment, transit, on-site employment, return migration and reintegration.

Through the Migrant Workers Act, we have strengthened the regulation of recruitment agencies to prevent abuse and maltreatment abroad and prescribed minimum wages for our domestic workers through standardized contracts wherever possible. On the other hand, the amended Anti-

trafficking Act criminalises even attempted trafficking punishable by imprisonment. Liabilities of accessories and accomplices of human trafficking activities have also been clearly laid down.

The Philippines underscores the need for a creative, multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral and comprehensive approach. Toward this end, the Government established the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) composed of representatives of relevant government agencies, civil society organizations, faith-based groups and the private sectors, among others.

Concerted efforts, especially through the Council, have resulted in the successful prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking. From 2005 to June 2017, the Philippines has had a total of 297 convictions involving 317 perpetrators. In 2016, 44 cases of trafficking in persons produced 53 convictions, 36 of them were sentenced to life imprisonment. From January to June 2017 alone, the Philippines has had 23 convictions for human trafficking.

For the Philippines, our commitment to battle trafficking in women and girls is manifest in our tabling the resolution “Trafficking in Women and Girls” since 1994. The resolution recognizes the importance of a revitalized global partnership to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It calls for more work to be done to understand the link between migration and trafficking in persons and to develop more effective responses to eliminate the risk of trafficking in the migration process.

The resolution also recognizes the heightened vulnerability to trafficking in humanitarian crisis situations. In response, the Philippines last year passed into law the Children’s Emergency Relief and Protection Act. It dictates that during a state of national or local calamity, the police, military and government service providers shall immediately undertake comprehensive measures and monitoring to prevent child trafficking for labor or sexual exploitation.

For the Philippine Government, adopting a one-country *team* and multi-stakeholder approach has proven to be effective. This consolidates the mandates, efforts, resources and interests of the dutybearers and

stakeholders in coming up with a robust response. This has also enabled us to mainstream the interventions down to the grassroots level by activating local structures at the village, city and municipal level such as the Council Against Trafficking And Violence Against Women And Children.

We have also forged bilateral agreements with migrant destination countries to protect Filipino workers, entered into a regional agreement in ASEAN for closer collaboration, and pursued partnerships with multilateral agencies.

We likewise actively participate in regional fora such as the Australia-Asia Program against Trafficking in Persons and the Bali Process on Human Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and related transnational crimes.

The UNODC 2016 Global Report highlights the magnitude of this continuing problem. More than ever, the need for a strong political will and decisive concerted action at the global level cannot be overemphasized.

While we note a significant increase in the number of parties to the relevant UN Trafficking in Person Conventions, we continue to urge those which have not to finally consider ratification. We appreciate the vital role of the UNODC in this respect particularly in its efforts to capacitate States by way of providing technical assistance.

The Philippines has been a supporter of the UN Voluntary Trust Fund to Protect Victims of Human Trafficking recognizing its valuable work with survivors. As a gesture of our continuing commitment, the Philippines commits to contribute a modest sum of 10,000 US Dollars to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for victims of Trafficking in Persons.

Thank you.