



PHILIPPINES

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Statement by

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on the priority theme

“Social integration”

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to assure you and the bureau of my delegation's support to your work and the work of the Commission.

My delegation believes that, by choosing "Social integration" as the priority theme, the Commission provides much-needed attention to a component of social development that is usually not actively nor consciously seen as a direct goal in itself. As rightly observed by the Secretary General's report (E/CN.5/2009/1), there has been insufficient progress on social impact analysis and on policies promoting social integration, despite the pronounced commitments to development goals, even as we monitor our progress against the goals of the Copenhagen Summit or the 2015 Millennium Development Goals.

We cannot overemphasize social integration. The extent to which social integration and cohesion are present in any society is directly proportional to its level of peace, security and development. In a sense, social integration can, therefore, be considered a barometer of the progress and success in a given society.

Mr. Chairman,

The makeup of societies is different. Some societies are characterized, in varying degrees, by rapidly changing demographics, by the effects of economic inequality, by the presence of culturally diverse and indigenous groups, and other categories. The varying composition and nature of societies may indeed require customized and unique strategies of social integration, but regardless of the type of strategies used, effectiveness will require two things: first, that the members of society, particularly the vulnerable ones are **empowered**, and second, that there is **guarantee of an environment that allows for equal opportunity** for all.

Empowering the vulnerable sectors of society—the poor, women, youth, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants, and disenfranchised groups is essential to increase a sense of belongingness and responsibility which are necessary for social integration. When people do not feel stigmatized, they are able to feel solidarity with the rest of society, which paves the way for them to be productive members who can contribute to the

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welfare and development of the larger community. This can be effectively achieved if the rest of society is encouraged to value tolerance and mutual respect and to celebrate diversity.

An environment that allows for equal opportunity for all is founded on the fundamental recognition of human rights. To achieve such an environment, governments would need to be sensitive to both the overt and hidden barriers to participation. In many cases, affirmative policies can be used to facilitate the integration of marginalized groups. However, this should not include any "forcible integration" that would lead to loss of the identity of a group and to a violation of human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

In the Philippines, poverty remains to be the number one cause of marginalization. Rural poverty is the Philippine government's particular focus since about 73% of the total number of poor in the Philippines reside in rural areas. The rural poor, consisting mainly of small and landless farmers, farm workers, fisherfolk and indigenous people, continue to lack access to productive resources including land, credit, technology and infrastructure.

The Philippines' poverty reduction policies, programs and strategies thus give the highest priority to rural and agricultural development by: (a) supporting rural enterprises and rural cooperatives; (b) constructing more farm-to-market roads; (c) providing greater access for farmers and indigenous people to land, credit and technology; (d) lessening the exploitation of farmers and fisherfolk by middlemen; (e) providing more strategic, effective and timely interventions and safety nets during natural disasters and economic shocks; and (f) improving the quality of life of the rural poor.

Aside from the poor, there is also a growing number of vulnerable groups in the country who are continuously threatened and marginalized by social, economic and environmental pressures as well as by natural disasters and economic shocks. These groups include women in especially difficult circumstances, children in need of social protection, disadvantaged youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, workers in the informal sector, indigenous peoples and upland settlers, dysfunctional families, victims of disasters and calamities, the landless, people living in coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems, workers in the formal sector vulnerable to work hazards, and returning migrant workers.

As a major strategy to address the situation of the poor and vulnerable, the Philippine government embarked on an integrated and community-driven system of delivering basic social services. This approach empowers communities, through their enhanced participation, to become agents themselves of poverty eradication.

Mr. Chairman,

This focus on social integration is a good contribution by the Commission at this time when member states are in the midst of efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. As I have stated earlier, it is all too easy to overlook the importance of social integration and to be caught up in the mere economics of development. But indifference and lack of attention to social integration may deepen inequalities, foment violence and conflict and breed the violation of human rights which will reverse all efforts at genuine development.

Mr. Chairman,

Many countries have obtained relative success at social integration. Perhaps, through this august Commission, these States can share their success stories in order to serve as examples from which other States can learn.

Thank you.