

PHILIPPINES

International Dialogue On Migration

Session 2: Reviewing progress on the migration-related targets: identifying gaps and promoting responses

Panel 1: Country Reporting

By

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Introduction

1. Mr. Chair and my co-panelists, distinguished participants, good afternoon.
2. The Philippines is honored to part of the panel for country reporting in this session of the IDM to reflect on the progress and the way ahead on our collective work on migration and related targets.
3. In July this year, the Philippines, along with 21 other countries, presented its report on the SDG agenda at the 2016 High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development in New York.

Starting Points

4. The Philippines is a country with 7.9 million migrants spread across over 200 countries and territories around the world. This represents about 8 percent of its current population. This makes migration one of the contemporary public policy realities in the Philippines.
5. The Philippines is energized by a good economic momentum in the recent years. Our economy has sustained a 7 per cent growth in GDP in the second quarter of this year, and remains as one of the fastest-growing economies in the region. The government acknowledges the challenge of making this growth more inclusive, such that migration is increasingly more of an option and choice rather than a necessity for Filipinos.
6. Over the decades, the Philippines has made modest strides in addressing drivers of migration and in improving migration governance.

7. The Economic Intelligence Unit of Economist recognized this in its 2016 Migration Governance Index, which was published this May. The survey of 15 countries considered the Philippines to have mature institutions with respect to institutional capacity, migrant rights, safe and orderly migration and regional and international cooperation. The report also cited notable programmes including the Diaspora to Development (D2D) initiative, which encourages circular migration, and the government-run Return and Reintegration Program, which provides incentives for emigrants to return. One of the most recent initiatives of the Philippines intends to address the issue on brain drain. Under a bilateral agreement with Germany, the Philippines is implementing a skills replenishment strategy to ensure that the supply of nurses in the Philippines would not suffer even if nurses continue to work in Germany.

8. The Philippines pays significant attention to the migration and related targets of the SDG agenda. We recognize that Target 10.7 on migration needs to interact with a variety of other targets, such as education, gender equality, employment and decent work, reducing inequality, and that our governance structures will have to stimulate mutually-reinforcing dynamics for the achievement of these inter-related targets.

9. In pursuing this, the Philippines is building on and guided by lessons learned in implementing the MDGs, particularly the following success factors:

- First, **good governance** that anchored on a **sustained engagement with all stakeholders** and **the strong commitment of the political leadership**;
- Second, a **comprehensive implementation plan** that covers institutional arrangements, communication and advocacy strategies, and financing. **Building system resilience** is important for a country like the Philippines, which is exposed to risks and shocks of natural and man-made disasters. Here, let me add that migrants face vulnerabilities in the host countries in situations of conflict, and a panel tomorrow will take up a joint initiative of the Philippines and the US in this regard.
- Third, a **data monitoring system to support the accountability mechanism**. This is at the heart of evidence-based policy-making which was emphasized in the discussions this morning and will be taken up in the course of this Dialogue. Reliable data sets must inform our decisions, our responses and the way we design and re-design programs and their metrics.

What has been done thus far

10. Building on these lessons and along with many other countries, the Philippine Government has embarked on the task of building an enabling policy environment to implement the SDGs successfully.

11. In brief, our efforts on mainstreaming SDG's involve awareness-building, integrating SDGs in development plans and programs, developing national SDGs indicators, and reviewing and strengthening of institutional mechanisms.

12. Since the adoption of the 2030 Development Agenda in September 2015, the Government, particularly the NEDA, has conducted orientation briefings and consultations for its inter-agency committees, including Cabinet-level committees of the NEDA Board composed of Ministers, and other multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder fora.

13. The initial year of the SDG implementation coincides with a new administration in the country, and the beginning of a new planning cycle, and this provides tailwind for the process of integrating SDGs into the long-term vision and goals and the national, sectoral and subnational plans. The administration is completing the formulation of an updated medium term Philippine Development Plan (PDP 2017 – 2022), together with the accompanying national investment plan, national budget priorities framework and sectoral plans.

14. An example of a sectoral plan that is of interest to our discussion is the Philippine Labor and Employment Plan (PLEP) 2017-2022, which is anchored on the SDGs employment-related goals particularly the full and productive employment and decent work for all. It focuses on job creation in the context of a sustained and inclusive economic growth, and by doing so, addresses an important driver of migration. The Plan is one of the important building blocks of the national development plan.

15. The SDG agenda also informs AmBisyonNatin (Our Vision) 2040, a people-centered national visioning process which widens the horizon of development planning, to beyond the six-year terms of political administrations. NEDA is actively engaging stakeholders from various sectors of the society on this inclusive visioning and planning exercise.

16. The integration of migration-related targets and indicators in the national plans is the focus of NEDA's Subcommittee on International Migration and Development (SCIMD). It is the task of this committee to ensure that migration and development agenda is given its appropriate place in the Philippine Development Plan. Let me note the last Philippine Development Plan (for 2011-2016) which is being updated had 60 provisions on migration and development and referred to this migration agenda in seven out of its nine chapters.

17. In the UN meetings, the Philippines often shares two good practices and early actions to implement the SDGs. These are (1) the participation of and provision of significant support by CSO's to the SDG awareness campaign and (2) the participatory process to assess and prioritize global SDG indicators, led by NEDA and Philippine Statistical Agency (PSA).

Challenges and Way Forward

18. As I conclude this presentation, I wish to share some insights on our way forward in successfully implementing the SDG agenda, in general:

- First, in terms of institutional arrangements, given the broader cross-sectoral scope of the SDGs, which will require the participation of all key government agencies, there is a need for a centralized coordinating and reporting mechanism. For now, none of mechanisms that have been tapped before for the MDGs have the mandate to subsume the themes and areas of concern related to the SDGs.

We need to re-think the structures we used for the MDGs to cover the policy scope and match the level of ambition of the SDG agenda.

In the Philippines, NEDA has proposed that dedicated oversight committee at the Cabinet level chaired by the Secretary of Socioeconomic Planning as the Chair will lead this effort. To ensure coherence, this committee will clearly define horizontal (inter-agency) and vertical linkages (among national, subnational, and local mechanisms) with and among concerned planning and budget coordinating bodies and subnational councils, among others.

- Second, with respect to the development of indicators, the formulated SDG indicators will need to be further refined, as to relevance to national priorities, clarity of definition of the terms, and availability of baselines disaggregated data. At the briefing yesterday by UNDP to Missions in Geneva, it was pointed out that determining indicators can be a sensitive political exercise in some contexts, but it is nevertheless an undertaking salient to the SDG implementation. This is true for migration-related targets. Without taking away the humanity of each and every migrant, good numbers/good metrics will help us understand the phenomenon of migration better as it evolves, and enable us to measure our progress more effectively. Shared datasets will be key in framing our future collaboration at all levels. As Director Helke mentioned this morning, it is possible to design smart benchmarks and there are already datasets and indices being developed by various groups involved in migration work.
- Third, with regard to the means of implementation (MOI), the Philippines has yet draw up a Roadmap to serve as an overall framework to guide government and other key stakeholders on needed actions and resources to reach the SDG targets. We recognize that the Roadmap should have a corresponding financial plan that should be linked to yearly budget frameworks and public investment programming. This work will entail the Executive's strong engagement with the Congress, which approves the Government budget. Among the important elements of this Roadmap is a communication plan to ensure ownership by the Filipino public, especially as it relates to ongoing national efforts to set long term vision and aspirations.

- Finally, while States assume the primary responsibility to achieve SDG targets, the pursuit of migration and migration-related targets will depend to a great degree on regional and international cooperation. SDG 17 – global partnerships – will be crucial in achieving these targets. Innovative partnerships and new collaborative approaches will need to animate our work at the national, sub-national, regional and global levels to bring the SDG agenda to life.

20. With this, I wish to end this presentation with the assurance that the Philippines will continue to make constructive contributions to the global discourse on migration, and I thank you all for your kind attention. **END**