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PHILIPPINES

International Organization for Migration
103rd Council Meeting
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STATEMENT

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Mister Chairman,

Please allow me at the outset to express my government's and my people's appreciation for the assistance that was readily extended by the IOM and by many of its member states to our country and my countrymen who were victims of the recent Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda).

As many of you know, Typhoon Haiyan is the strongest typhoon that ever made landfall. Typhoon Haiyan covered a large swathe of Central Philippines and the magnitude of the havoc it left is simply overwhelming. With its storm surge that rampaged our islands' shorelines, more than 13 million were adversely affected, 3.4 million displaced, 1.1 million homes damaged. The latest casualty count stands at 5,235 dead and more than 1,600 persons still missing.

Our people are thankful for IOM's immediate humanitarian actions. To date, IOM has assisted 8,444 households or around 42,000 typhoon victims through the provision of shelter kits and non-food items. We also appreciate the visit last week of DG Swing to the most typhoon-ravaged areas in the Philippines.

Moreover, IOM, in cooperation with our government's Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Salvation Army, has set up a Migration Outflow Desk, to track migration outflow and to identify vulnerabilities of those leaving the disaster areas and proactively protect potential human trafficking victims.

Mister Chairman,

This Council meeting comes at a most opportune time. The IOM will once more take the lead in pursuing follow-through actions to the outcomes of the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development (UN HLD).

While there were convergence among the themes of the UNHLD outcome document, the UN Secretary General's Report, and the Civil Society programs, there were no implementing plans that were formulated. The challenge is for the IOM, as the leading global organization on migration, to lead in the formulation of the implementing plan to put into reality the outcomes of the UN HLD.

Mister Chairman,

I recall that in that global meeting, the Philippines strongly advocated that the post 2015 development agenda should squarely address migration. This advocacy is best articulated by the Philippines' Secretary of Foreign Affairs when he said before the UN General Assembly that "migration is a cross cutting issue relevant to our efforts to promote human rights, reduce poverty and foster economic development. The Philippines will continue to advocate the protection of rights of migrants, regardless of migration status; the recognition of migrants' positive contribution to development in both sending and receiving countries; and the creation of programs which support families, especially children who are left behind."

My country has also advocated the inclusion in the agenda of the international migration discourse the plight of migrants who find themselves in conflict and disaster areas.

The rapid deterioration of many crisis situations constantly reminds us of the enduring vulnerabilities of migrants in emergency situations. Such vulnerabilities are exacerbated when, for whatever the reasons, assistance is unable to reach them or when they cannot move to safety. Migrants caught in crisis situations, irrespective of their status, are more likely to be unable to obtain immediate assistance.

Our national experience of repatriating thousands of Filipino migrants, to get them out of harms way, has been instructive and enriching as it opened new windows of cooperation with bilateral partners, the UN, and the IOM. Our experience is what we can share with other countries.

And as much as we are ready to share our best practices, we are also open and prepared to learn from the experience of others.

Mister President,

Banking on our national experience and taking a step further the suggestion of the UN Secretary General Special Representative on Migration and Development, Sir Peter Sutherland, the Philippines, together with the United States, is working on this initiative on “migrants in crisis situation”, to attempt to forge creative platforms on which states – host, transit or sending – can cooperate better to address the protection needs of migrants caught in crisis situations.

We are very pleased that since day one, the IOM, has been there with us, providing both administrative and policy support.

Mister President,

Allow me, at this point, to warmly congratulate Director General William “Bill” Swing, and the officers and staff of the IOM, for the outstanding work they have been doing in ensuring safe and humane migration.

Aside from the leadership and eminence of the IOM in the run up to and during the UN HLD, for the first time, IOM has successfully organized the Diaspora Ministerial Conference (DMC) that brought together in one roof, for two days, more than 500 delegates, among them are 55 ministers and minister level officials from all corners of the globe, to discuss migration and development.

In support of these IOM initiatives, the Philippines was represented not only by one, but three capital-based minister level officials who shared our national experience on the various aspects of diaspora and development in both the HLD and the DMC.

Mister Chairman,

The Philippines shares the leadership mantra of this Administration - continuity, coherence, and change.

We recognize the serious efforts of the Administration to ensure the continuity of the Organization through the multi-year budget reform package, the public-private partnership, professionalism of staff and by pro-actively addressing administrative issues of arrears, amendments, and accessions.

As most of you know, the Philippines hosts the Manila Administrative Center (MAC). Both IOMs Chief of Staff and Resources Director, Mr. Ovais Sarmad and Bruce Reed, who in a time of their respective careers were assigned to head the MAC, are living witnesses of the smart move of the Organization to base large portion of its back office operations in my country. The MAC has been cited as model for efficiency and cost effectiveness in times of serious financial constraints.

Mister Chairman,

We acknowledge the initiatives of IOM to ensure policy and operational coherence, particularly in the follow through action called for by the UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development, and in the regional consultative processes, such as the Colombo Process, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and the Bali Process, and in the mitigation and adaptation programs against further environmental degradation and on climate change, in so far as it relates to migration.

We also reiterate our support for the Emergency Funding Mechanism and the Migration Crisis Operational Framework. Both the Mechanism and the Framework were ground tested and proved to be effective and facilitated more efficient work of the IOM, especially the cluster approach, in conflict saddled Syria and in the devastations brought by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

Mister Chairman,

Protection of migrants is one of the three core foreign policies of my country. At the center of this policy is the Filipino migrant.

Hence, our migrants' protection mantle, our policies and programs, covers the whole migration cycle, from pre-departure to return and reintegration. At each stage of the migration cycle, specific services and assistance are extended and are made available to Filipino migrants.

I must add, however, that my country is a strong believer that protection of migrants' rights, regardless of their migration status, is a shared responsibility of countries of origin, transit and destination. It is in this light that we continue to support IOM's initiatives to create enabling environment for countries, especially migrant receiving countries, to advocate migrants' rights protection.

My country also believes that countries must band together in recognizing the positive contribution of migrants to change and development, not only to the countries of origin but also to the countries of destination, as well as their respective communities.

Migrants should be perceived as assets, source of capitals and skills and rich culture. They should not be seen as threats and liabilities.

It is high time that discourses on international migration should also be concerned with increasing incidents of discrimination and xenophobia against migrants.

Mister Chairman,

Before I close, my government wishes to welcome the new member states and new observers to the growing and energized IOM family.

Finally, I wish to conclude my remarks with a call to the IOM and its member states to continue enhancing its cooperation in order to close the loopholes and gaps in migrants' protection and to further work towards a better, safe and humane migration.

Thank you. END