

Draft Philippine National Statement: UNHCR 75th Executive Committee Session; General Debate

October 14-18, 2024

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Honorable Chair,
High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

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The Philippines is deeply honored for this opportunity to speak in this important gathering, where we reaffirm once again our shared commitment for the protection of refugees, stateless persons, the internally displaced, and other persons of concern. We extend our sincerest gratitude to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Executive Committee for their tireless efforts and dedication to this vital cause for humanity.

The Philippines remains a steadfast, active partner of the UNHCR, in implementing the 1951, 1954 and 1961 Conventions, as well as the Global Compact on Refugees (GRF). The Philippines prides itself on its long humanitarian tradition as a safe haven of people seeking protection from persecution, conflict and violence. We stand resolute alongside the international community in safeguarding the rights and dignity of the forcibly displaced and stateless persons, including those in particularly vulnerable situations – women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples. Our commitment to champion the noble causes of these vulnerable and marginalized populations is further strengthened by their inclusion in the Philippine Development Plan 2023 to 2028.

The Philippines wishes to share its recent milestones in enhancing its existing legal and policy frameworks to address statelessness or those at-risk of becoming one. We developed a National Action Plan to End Statelessness, which was aligned with UNHCR's iBelong Campaign. Based

on a landmark judicial decision by our Supreme Court, we enacted a statute recognizing foundlings born in the Philippines as citizens. We likewise issued the first-ever judiciary-initiated Rule to facilitate the naturalization of recognized refugees and stateless persons in our country.

Few remaining action points under our NAP remain a work in progress. We continue to strengthen our resolve, adopting not just a whole-of-government approach but also the whole-of-society approach, to find durable solutions to legal identity issues confronting unregistered children within the context of forced displacement due to armed conflict, the Persons of Japanese Descent, and the *Sama Bajau* populations, and those in migratory settings. We reinvigorated our advocacy for a law to create a dedicated and independent office on refugee and statelessness protection. We fully appreciate and support the cooperation between the Government of Japan and the UNHCR to expand the birth registration initiatives in identified local government units in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), benefitting persons at risk of statelessness in Southern Philippines.

In addition to our national efforts, the Philippines is proud to announce its commitment to joining the **Global Alliance to End Statelessness**, additionally joining as a "Solution Seeker" within said framework, and as member of its Advisory Committee. Our membership is aligned with our thrust to pursue initiatives to fulfill our pledges in the GRF. It is also an opportunity for the Philippines to pursue its remaining National Action Plan action points to its full implementation, particularly by providing durable solutions for identified at-risk populations. We look forward to collaborating on innovative solutions that will operationalize our goals and bring us closer to ending statelessness, both within our region and globally.

We continue to enhance our legal frameworks for our pilot Complimentary Pathways (CPath) Program on Education to ensure timely and effective protection and access to services of its beneficiaries - the Rohingya refugee students. The CPath Initiative offers an innovative national model that

addresses gaps in legal protection, access to services, and opportunities for livelihood, thus, enabling refugees, stateless persons, and other persons of concern not only protection but also opportunities to rebuild their lives with dignity.

Honorable Chair, High Commissioner,

The Philippines reiterates its strong support for the UNHCR as it takes on complex and continually evolving challenges, and strives to meet rising expectations. Nonetheless, governments and stakeholders must also play their part in ensuring that the UNHCR has the resources to fulfill its mandate. No matter how modest a contribution may be, especially for middle countries like the Philippines, we need to ensure that adequate resources are provided for this purpose. For its part, we trust that the UNHCR will continue to adhere closely to its mandate, fulfilling it with efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

The Philippines renews its unwavering commitment and support for the protection of refugees, stateless persons, the internally displaced, and other persons of concern. We stand ready to work alongside the UNHCR, our fellow member states, and the international community to ensure that these individuals are truly protected, and given the opportunity to rebuild their lives with hope, dignity, and safety.

Thank you, Honorable Chair.