



PHILIPPINES

The Way Forward: A Philippine Perspective

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Mr. Chairman

I would like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's felicitations to you Mr. Chairman and to the members of your Bureau on your well-deserved election and competent leadership in guiding the session toward an outcome that could reaffirm needed actions to achieve sustainable development.

At the outset, the Philippines aligns itself with the statement of the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group G77 and China.

Mr. Chairman

Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger ranks first among the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Eradicating poverty is an indispensable prerequisite for sustainable economic growth and development for developing countries. The Philippines has its Medium Term Philippine Development Plan and the Ten Point Agenda of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo specifically geared towards achieving the target for MDG One.

While the Philippines has experienced steady progress towards reaching most of the MDG targets due to improved economic growth and national policy guidance, halfway through the 2015 target, threats to achieving some goals appear through the following inter-related factors -

First, there is a deterioration of the natural resource base. High population growth combined with finite resources lead to consumption pressures that expose the natural resource base to over-extraction leading to its deterioration.

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Most of the 32 percent of the Philippine population living below the poverty line rely mainly on agriculture and fisheries for their sources of livelihood and food and these households are dependent on the continuous productivity of the land and water resources;

Linked to this is the second factor of continued global unsustainable patterns of consumption. Unsustainable consumption is a serious threat to achieving MDG One as it continues to add pressure to the natural resource base. The thematic cluster discussions cover a wide range of topics relating to managing the natural resource base of economic and social development through sustainable agriculture and rural development. However, it did not extensively touch on unsustainable consumption as one of the barriers in achieving sustainable development. Fundamental changes in the way societies consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development. It is timely that we develop awareness raising programs, particularly among the youth;

Third, the challenges of environmental degradation and climate change are also formidable and clearly go beyond the capacity of developing countries to address on their own. It is another factor that contributes to the tightening of food supplies. Global consensus and political support on how to address climate change is essential. While so much time and discussions are being dedicated to concerns relating to climate change, clear and concrete adaptation measures should be drawn to guide country and inter-country action. Climate change is a threat not only to MDG One and all the other MDGs, but to the very existence of life and society as we know it;

The fourth interlinked challenge that is critical for the Philippines is that an emerging food and energy crisis is imminent. Tightening global food supplies can be linked to competitive crop use, where farmers may decide to sell their crops, not as food but as alternative source of energy. This trend, while providing farmers greater opportunity, can translate into rising prices, especially of wage goods. This is a great concern for us since rising prices will increase the number of hungry families, and runs counter to one of the Philippines' goals of making food plentiful at affordable prices.

Mr. Chairman

Over the years, common but differentiated responsibilities have been largely discussed in the context of examining the social, economic and environmental effects of development decisions. In the Philippines, all stakeholders are now involved in mainstreaming sustainable development into the development decision-making process. Farmers are starting to adopt sustainable agriculture practices such as the landscape approach, ecosystem-based management, and integrated pest management. Local government units are becoming more involved in watershed management using the river basin approach and are more conscious in managing their coastal and water resources. More industry players

are engaging in clean development mechanism projects. The government is also encouraging sustainable resource management through preferred tenurial instruments. In 2006, agreements on industrial forest management covering 211,198 hectares, socialized industrial forest management of 6,175 hectares, and community-based forest management for 128 sites have been forged.

However, since most of these activities are still ongoing, their impact has yet to be assessed. Nevertheless, it can be said that there has been progress.

The implementation of these strategies and initiatives are not enough as we need to further widen their scope. However, barriers such as failure to build support for replication; resources limitation to expand coverage; lack of legal powers to implement a particular instrument and legal responsibilities split between agencies; budget restrictions; political and cultural barriers that may include lack of political or public acceptance and restrictions from pressure groups, pose remaining challenges.

Mr. Chairman

Given that social development goals are dependent on sustaining economic growth and environment protection, members of the CSD should always be reminded of its unique role and mandate of being the primary high level United Nations body to accelerate sustainable development. The global endeavor is still to eradicate poverty and hunger. Thus, we should agree on concrete development oriented policy options and actions owned by all stakeholders to achieve sustainable development to achieve this goal. A built-in mechanism for overseeing the progress of implementation and securing feedback is also essential in order that adjustments may be made and/or early solutions may be provided.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the Philippines continues to widely promote the principles of sustainable development and adheres to the Rio and Johannesburg commitments. Success of both would contribute to the acceleration of progress towards sustainable development and attainment of the MDG targets. However, this can only be realized by involving all stakeholders in every development-oriented decision to consider the economic, social and environmental consequences.

We also realize that the best way to fast track progress is by collaborating with all sustainable development advocates among the CSD-member countries, the international development agencies, and the major groups. We, therefore, actively seek and look forward to further working with all of you.

Thank you.