

## **CLOSING STATEMENT**

**Universal Periodic Review  
14 November 2022**

**Hon. Jesus Crispin C. Remulla  
Secretary of Justice**

Thank you, Madame Chair.

I believe we had an open and productive dialogue this morning. We thank all delegations that recognized the significant strides the Philippine Government has made in fulfilling its solemn duty to the Filipino people to promote and protect their fundamental and inalienable human rights since the third cycle of the UPR in 2017. We take note of the recommendations that have been propounded and I assure you that we will study them very carefully with a view to adopting those that will help us advance our national human rights agenda.

We would also like to recognize the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines and civil society organizations that have contributed to this process, as well as our media back home that are covering this event thus helping raise the public's awareness of human rights issues. The Philippine Government recognizes the vital role they play in our democracy and in upholding the dignity of each and every Filipino. Their active participation in

the different stages of the UPR attests to the robustness of our civic space where open and lively discourse on human rights is enabled and welcomed.

This 4<sup>th</sup> cycle of the UPR comes at a most opportune time. We have a new government that is strongly committed to reforms and to a people-centered and human rights-based governance and development agenda. The end-of-term assessment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Philippines Human Rights Action Plan (PHRP) is scheduled in the first quarter of 2023 and, soon after, we will begin crafting the 4<sup>th</sup> iteration of the PHRP. This will be done through an inclusive and multi-stakeholder process, including the CHR and civil society organizations. The recommendations and comments arising from this review as well as those from treaty bodies and the Enhanced Interactive Dialogue we had last October at HRC51 will feed into this process.

Our dialogue today has strengthened our belief in the utility of the UPR as a constructive process for the assessment and promotion of state compliance with international human rights standards.

Madame Chair, Excellencies, as we conclude this review process, allow me to reiterate two very important messages. First, the Philippines is firmly committed to human rights and the

rule of law for these are the cornerstones of a functioning democracy. In over a century of nation-building and democratic consolidation, we have built strong legal frameworks and institutions to guarantee human rights and foster social justice in our country. Our democratic and human rights institutions are working. But there is of course room for improvement – this we acknowledge with all sincerity and openness.

Let me emphasize that the Philippine Government is willing and able to address gaps where they exist. As I have said earlier, we are pursuing comprehensive, transformational reforms across all five pillars of our justice system. These are game-changing reforms aimed at redefining the Philippines' legal culture in order for us to deliver *“real justice in real time”* which we owe to the Filipino people.

Second, in this reform journey we welcome constructive engagement with those that can help us, including civil society, partners in the international community, and UN human rights mechanisms.

Aside from the UN Joint Program on human rights, I am pleased to note that the Department of Justice has an ongoing technical cooperation program with the European Union to strengthen domestic accountability mechanisms. We are

committed to fully implementing the agreed work program under GOJUST II. Human rights, the rule of law, and democracy are also important areas of cooperation with bilateral partners such as the United States and Australia.

As it is in all countries, the promotion and protection of human rights is a never-ending job. We will fix what needs fixing and improve what needs improving. But we have a strong foundation and commitment to human rights that will not waiver. Human rights are intrinsic in the fabric of Philippine society and democracy. In this regard, we welcome partnerships to help us move forward – partnerships that respect the sovereignty and agency of the Philippine Government to fulfill its obligations and do right by its own people.

Let me end by thanking our friends from the troika – Marshall Islands, Namibia and Poland – and the Secretariat for the support and efficient facilitation of this review process. My delegation looks forward to working with you in the finalization of the Working Group's Report on the Philippines.

Thank you. Maraming salamat po.