



# PHILIPPINES

**51<sup>ST</sup> REGULAR SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**  
**Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the Philippines**  
**5 October 2022**

## OPENING STATEMENT

Delivered by

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On the Occasion of the  
**51<sup>st</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council –**  
**Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the Philippines**  
*05 October 2022; Geneva, Switzerland*

(Allotted time: 5 minutes, max 6 minutes)

***“Real Justice in Real Time”***

Thank you, Mr. Vice President,  
Madame Acting High Commissioner,  
Distinguished Panelists,  
Excellencies,

### Opening

The Philippine Government, through the unifying leadership of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., is undertaking **transformational reform of its justice and law enforcement sectors.**

It is doing so to ensure the rule of law and the promotion and protection of the human rights of all its citizens. On the ground, through **process-driven solutions** to problems we continue to identify and to seek to solve.

### President Marcos setting the tone at the top

We are on a **new pathway** towards an inclusive and empowering ecosystem of social justice. President Marcos is a **consensus-builder** and has a **deeply human approach** to law enforcement and the anti-illegal drug campaign.

He has reminded the Philippine National Police that the **use of force must always be reasonable, accountable, justifiable, and only utilized when necessary**. An internal disciplinary program has been enacted to right the wrongs of erring law enforcement officials that abuse their power and the public trust.

President Marcos has refocused the anti-illegal drug campaign – **tackling the source of the problem**. He has stated that criminal masterminds must be apprehended and punished, not small scale users on the street. He has emphasized the need for **rehabilitation, prevention, education and assistance to victims and their families**.

### Department of Justice-led reforms

These targeted and bold measures aim to **change the culture** of our judicial and law enforcement system, which have produced certain flaws and delays in the carriage of justice. They are also in line and, in some cases, go beyond international standards and best practices.

At the Department of Justice, we are serious about human rights. We want to **inject human rights into every step of our law enforcement and judicial processes**. This assures that no one is left behind and that the wheels of justice truly

serve all without distinction. It makes for a solid foundation of a civilized, democratic society – which is at the heart of Filipino culture, identity and history. We are reforming our system to deliver what our people deserve best - **real justice in real time**.

Just last month, **371 persons deprived of their liberty**, many of whom had already served their sentences if not for procedural oversights, were **released from prison**. We are **decentralizing our congested prison system**. I am personally committed to continuing regular releases and aim to have **5,000 persons released by June next year**.

The Department of Justice is working closely with the Department of Interior and Local Government and the Supreme Court – through the **Justice Sector Coordinating Council** – a mechanism for effective coordination and sharing of information, planning, and implementation of joint initiatives.

We are reinforcing the interfaces **between prosecutors and law enforcement** – streamlining investigative and accountability processes and having them work together during case build-up investigation. This will improve the quality of cases that reach the courts, chances of success in prosecution, certainty of punishment, and deterrence against criminality.

This is exemplified through the **Review Panel** created by the Department of Justice to re-examine incidents that transpired in the context of the government's anti-illegal drug campaign. Recently, at least seven (7) incidents involving deaths were filed before the courts, for which 25 police officers have been indicted. At least eight (8) police officers were dismissed from the service, and five (5) suspended or sanctioned. A total of 302 cases have been referred by the Review Panel to the National Bureau of Investigation for case buildup.

We continue to **invite CSOs, witnesses, and families of victims to come forward** and provide information and file appropriate cases that will help the Review Panel in the investigations and to secure justice for the family of victims. The

Department is ready to provide needed support and security to witnesses, with a more comprehensive **witness protection program** so that fear will not impede justice. This is **about protection, not politics**.

The **rights of women and children are paramount in this new law enforcement and judicial framework**. In the coming months, we will further improve the current prosecution success rate of 88% for cases involving women, and 96% for cases involving children.

All these concrete reforms have taken place within the **first 100 days of the Marcos Administration**.

*UN Joint Program on Human Rights (UNJP)*

In this light, we **will continue to engage constructively** with Member States, the UN and various stakeholders on human rights – **within the parameters of our own reality and institutions** – where true ownership belongs and only through which sustainability, scale and impact are attained.

The Philippine Commission on Human Rights is one such institution, an independent Constitutional body that serves as an important national human rights monitor.

Hence, we are continuing the UN Joint Program as a partnership that supports our sovereign institutions, and ongoing programs and policies on human rights. Good progress has been made in terms of capacity-building and training, and we thank donors for their support.

As we move forward into years two and three, we shall work with the UN Resident Coordinator and the UNJP Steering Committee to make its deliverables

**more responsive to local conditions and needs, transparent, accountable and process-driven.**

Closing

**Our reforms for transformational change, for real justice in real time, will continue.** There is no turning back.

It is the overwhelming mandate given to us by our people. It is a responsibility which the Administration of President Marcos takes on with utmost seriousness, professionalism, and vigor.

We dream of country in which all our citizens are safe, prosperous, and enjoy human rights

What we ask of you, the Human Rights Council and partners, is to **listen to us**. To **understand the context** of our challenges – **beside us on the ground**, not above us from afar.

To trust that we know best what is good for our people and to work with us to realize the vision of human rights and justice for all.

I thank you.