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STATEMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES
at the
17th SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNIDO
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Madame President,
Excellencies:

On behalf of the delegation of the Philippines, I wish to congratulate you on your election as President of the 17th Session of the General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). Our delegation assures you and your bureau of our support in achieving an efficient and fruitful conduct of the conference.

We likewise wish to congratulate Director-General Li Yong on his re-appointment as Director-General of UNIDO as we look forward to further strengthening our harmonious and productive partnership.

In today's changing world, we all need to work together even more purposefully. Developments of the 21st century have revolutionized the conduct of business, thereby opening up new opportunities for growth. For instance, today's expanding markets and greater access of consumers to innovation have fostered a growing convergence of market, technology, and human capital.

However, despite the rapid economic growth brought about by technological advancements in the past decades, poverty and inequality remain a global scourge.

While globalization has fostered rapid economic growth and connectivity among economies, it has also caused many developing countries to be left out from reaping its benefits.

Nevertheless, we cannot discount the potential role of industrialization and the use of emerging technology—such as Artificial Intelligence, *Internet of Things*, and *Big data*, among others—in uplifting the standards of living, promoting inclusive growth, and eradicating poverty.

The UNIDO, being the sole UN agency with the specialized task to promote industrialization, is also responsible for fostering inclusive and sustainable industrial development (or ISID). For over half a century since its inception, its role in promoting industrialization to eradicate poverty through inclusive growth has established its comparative advantage in this specific essential mandate.

Industrialization provides developing countries the opportunity to get a larger share of the global value chain. It is thus a great equalizer among nations and a catalyst for inclusivity.

Nevertheless, inclusivity requires the provision of greater market access by developed economies to developing ones. We must ensure

that globalization does not only lead to generating wealth but to spreading it as well.

Madame President, our delegation notes that the departure of several member states from UNIDO over the years has undoubtedly put a strain on the organization's financial resources. Hence, it is the view of our delegation that the UNIDO must sustain its efforts on its core mandate, and utilize its competitive advantage to allow the organization to deliver in spite of the challenges it faces today. UNIDO must avoid the pitfall of spreading itself too thinly, attempting to involve itself in areas that are already amply covered by other international organizations.

While partnerships may appear beneficial in the short term, in the medium and long term, these endeavors could inadvertently contribute to a loss of focus, and ultimately loss of comparative advantage in the very area where UNIDO has been successful and where it has enjoyed international recognition.

The Philippines hopes that under the able leadership of the Director-General, UNIDO could redouble its efforts and judiciously employ the diminished regular budget towards projects and programs in the areas of its competence while, at the same time, ensuring that overhead and administrative expenses are kept at sustainable levels.

In this connection, my delegation takes note of the efforts of the Director-General in streamlining UNIDO's structure. The restructuring

is a bold overhaul of UNIDO with some countries benefitting from enhanced representative roles, while the vast majority of Member States have had their representation diminished. Even as the Philippines has exercised utmost understanding of the underlying imperatives for this drastic reorganization, we nevertheless reiterate our principled position that the restructuring program must not lead to diminished engagement by UNIDO with affected member states, and must not result in a decrease in programs and projects in the countries concerned. The direct access of field office representatives to decision makers in headquarters must be ensured so that UNIDO's presence is not diminished and its technical cooperation delivery not adversely affected.

In this regard, our delegation calls on the countries withdrawing, or considering withdrawal, from UNIDO to reconsider their decision: remain and contribute towards an inclusive development and sustainable global industrial environment. We must all keep in mind that both developing and developed countries need to continue to work together to improve the quality of life of all humankind.

Allow me to take this opportunity to reiterate the continuing support of my country for UNIDO. The Philippines will always be a part of UNIDO's history as one of its founding members and as the country that gave UNIDO its first Director-General, our late Foreign Affairs Secretary Domingo L. Siazon, Jr.

In fact, to demonstrate our support, my country has once again offered to take its partnership with UNIDO to a higher level by offering our services as External Auditor beginning on the 1st of July next year. We are confident that the track record of our Commission on Audit will redound to UNIDO's benefit and contribute to strengthening it further as an institution.

It is my country's desire for UNIDO to succeed. Following its sustained efforts, we are optimistic that the quality of life of the least of our brethren will improve.

For us to realize this, however, UNIDO Field Offices, such as the one in the Philippines, must be empowered and given access to decision-makers, regardless of the nature of their offices. It must be emphasized that UNIDO's presence and technical cooperation in any country should not be weakened as a result of the field network restructuring.

To further localize the UN's advocacy and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Philippines has embarked on working towards an ambitious and long-term vision popularly called "AmBisyon Natin 2040" or "Our Vision 2040".

It is a vision which represents the collective long-term aspirations of our people to live in a country where they are all strongly rooted, comfortable, and secure by the year 2040. Specifically, it aims to have

people completely free from poverty, smart and innovative, and is able to live long and healthy lives in a high-trust society.

Some may say that this is quite an ambitious vision and, indeed, it is. But with the continued assistance and cooperation of our partners in the international community, we are confident that we will be able to fulfill our long-term national goals and aspirations.

In this regard, my government looks forward to more constructive discussions with UNIDO in fulfilling this vision, one that is in harmony with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Madame President, as I conclude, let me assure you that the Philippines is ready to be UNIDO's partner for meaningful change. I know that, together, we can effectively achieve the SDGs and create a global community where no one is forsaken.

Thank you for your kind attention.