

Philippines Voluntary National Review
Major Groups and other Stakeholders Statement
12 July 2022

While we welcome the government's initiative to create a Stakeholders' Chamber and update the Philippine Development Plan, we are alarmed at how government consultations with CSOs are undervalued and taken for granted.

We hold in consternation the process which negates civil society engagement as we note a trend to technocratize state-society relations and invalidates the important roles of rights holders and other stakeholders as primary actors in achieving the SDGs.

Systemic issues leading to food insecurity, lack of access to basic health, education, social justice, healthful ecology, among others, remain unresolved. The debt-driven pandemic response cost Filipinos PhP 12.8 trillion. It is back to neoliberal development paradigm with a market-driven economy that further the impoverished situation of the marginalized groups -- indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, elderly, women, girls, children, youth, LGBTQ+, Bangsamoro, homeless and informal workers.

The legislative advocacy gains on the protection of women and children, reproductive health, and inclusive education are not fully implemented and monitored, while those laws that restrict the democratic civic spaces like the Anti-Terror Bill has been rolled out to silence the voices of the people seeking social justice.

We urgently call the Philippine government to:

1. Seriously address the regression of its obligations on upholding human rights
2. Invest higher budget in health, education, social protection, agriculture, democratic governance and empowering citizenry
3. Create an enabling mechanism that ensures effective and meaningful participation of historically disadvantaged indigenous peoples and marginalized groups in the development processes in attaining SDGs.
4. Repeal laws on foreign investments and trade not consistent with the national sovereignty and interest of the Filipino people.

The SDG implementation must be guided by a people-centered and human rights-based development framework to address the decades-long problem of a market-driven, profit-biased neo-liberal development that hinders the eradication of poverty, inequalities and discrimination.