



PALAIS DES NATIONS – 1211, GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND

17 July 2023

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to the fourth cycle review of the Philippines by the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group at its 41st session in November 2022. The constructive engagement between your Government, my Office, and the UPR mechanism is warmly welcome. As the final outcome report on the review of the Philippines was recently adopted by the Human Rights Council at its 52nd session, I have also taken note of the efforts of your Government to implement specific recommendations since the previous review.

A matrix of thematically clustered recommendations, starting with those supported by your Government, is available at OHCHR's website (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ph-index>), and should be considered as part of this letter. The matrix indicates the recommending State and links each recommendation to relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In annex, I have also attached my Office's observations in light of the outcome of the fourth cycle of the UPR. In line with previous practice, I will be sending similar observations to all Member States once their fourth cycle UPR outcome is adopted by the Human Rights Council, with a view to follow-up action in close cooperation with national entities and other stakeholders.

I take this opportunity to draw your attention to the support available through the Voluntary Fund for UPR Implementation, which may be activated at the request and with the consent of a concerned State, along with tools such as the "[UPR practical guidance](#)" and the "[UN good practices](#)" repository on how the UPR process supports sustainable development, with a view to facilitating efforts to implement UPR recommendations in line with the SDGs.

Please accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Volker Türk

His Excellency
Mr. Enrique Austria Manalo
Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines



Observations in light of the outcome of the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review

Positive note is taken of the human rights agenda of the Philippines, which includes reforming the justice and law enforcement sectors, investing in the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights, protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, and constructively engaging with the international community. Equally positive were the assurances given by the Government Delegation to the UPR Working Group that the Government was not inclined to reinstate the death penalty, although bills have been introduced to that effect. The Philippines' commitment and adherence to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, including through the adoption and implementation of domestic policy and institutional frameworks, are also commendable.

It is encouraging to note that those UPR recommendations which did not enjoy the support of the Philippines might be revisited in the future, as conveyed by the Delegation. It is also noteworthy that recommendations to establish a national preventative mechanism on torture enjoyed the support of the Philippines – the Government is encouraged to expedite the establishment of this mechanism.

In the context of the campaign against illegal drugs, the Philippines is strongly encouraged to ensure prompt, independent, impartial, thorough, and transparent investigations into all killings and other alleged human rights violations, culminating in credible prosecutions of alleged perpetrators and effective remedies for victims and their families. The Government is also encouraged to ensure full respect for the right to freedom of expression, particularly in light of concerns conveyed by some Member States during the review. It is also important that the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act be fully implemented, and that the Philippines ensures full respect for the principle of free, prior, and informed consent and meaningful participation at all stages of development projects which affect indigenous peoples. It is a positive sign that a recommendation in this regard enjoyed the support of the Philippines.

Due note is taken of the United Nations Joint Programme on Human Rights, which focuses on providing support to the Philippines in a spirit of partnership and constructive engagement with the Government. The UPR recommendations received at the recent review relate to the six key areas of this programme, and their implementation will contribute to its effective implementation. OHCHR is looking forward to the successful implementation of this Programme by 2024, in full collaboration with the Office and other identified United Nations entities.

It is noted that an end-of-term assessment of the third Philippine Human Rights Plan was scheduled to take place in 2023, and that preparation of the fourth Human Rights Plan will commence thereafter. It is urged that this fourth plan focus on following up on the recommendations from the recent review, and that it be developed in close consultation and cooperation with all stakeholders, in particular the parliament,



the judiciary, the national human rights institution, local and regional governments, and civil society organizations. The matrix may be of use in the development of the plan. The Government is encouraged to explicitly link each UPR recommendation to corresponding recommendations of other international or regional human rights mechanisms and to the relevant SDG and its targets. This will, in turn, facilitate the creation of synergies between UPR implementation and SDG related actions and reporting within the context of the Voluntary National Review (VNR). In this regard, OHCHR stands ready to provide technical assistance, including through the United Nations Joint Programme.

Positive note is taken of the fact that the Philippines supported recommendations to establish a permanent national mechanism for implementation, reporting and follow-up (NMRF) to recommendations from international human rights mechanisms, with assistance from the Office. As conveyed by the Delegation during the review, some of the functions of the NMRF were being carried out by the Presidential Human Rights Committee. It is therefore suggested that this Committee is transformed into a permanent and fully functional NMRF, with the aim of ensuring a coordinated and effective approach to reporting to international human rights mechanisms and to implementing the recommendations, in line with the guidance provided by OHCHR following regional consultations and the High Commissioner's report to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/50/64](#)). To this end and upon request, OHCHR is ready to offer relevant technical assistance.

Further, an important measure that can positively contribute to follow-up action is voluntary mid-term UPR reporting. All Member States are encouraged to submit a voluntary mid-term UPR report some two years after the adoption of the UPR outcome. In this regard, the Government is encouraged to consider submitting a mid-term report on follow-up to the fourth cycle UPR recommendations by 2025, detailing both implementation efforts as well as challenges to implementation, including the possible need for technical or capacity-building assistance.

OHCHR
17 July 2023