

# PH-US-UNCTAD HARNESSING STI FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION WORKSHOP

Welcome Remarks

**LEAH J. BUENDIA, Ph.D.**

Undersecretary for Research and Development

*DOST Philippines Secretary Renato U. Solidum, Jr.,*

*Ms. Maria Theresa 'Bimbi' Villa from the U.S. Embassy in the Philippines,*

*Our colleagues who have been working with us to put everything together and make this a success,*

*The United States of America's Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State, Dr. Patricia Gruber,*

*UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics Director Shamika Sirimanne,*

*The rest of the team from the United States of America and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development,*

*Our esteemed speakers and poster presenters,  
Our dear local and international participants,*

Good morning and welcome to the Philippines.

The World Risk Report in 2023 states the Philippines has the highest disaster risk worldwide, followed by Indonesia and India. It also states that continuing the previous year's trend, the Americas is the continent with the highest disaster risk which is followed by Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Europe.

In the Significant Natural Hazards and Conflicts Snapshot published just last month by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, natural hazards and conflict affected more than 13.7 million people in the Philippines in 2023. Only 11 tropical cyclones entered the Philippines Area of Responsibility last year from an average of 20 tropical cyclones. However, the enhanced southwest monsoon brought

heavy rains that caused floods and landslides. In December 2023, a series of strong earthquakes hit Mindanao that caused extensive damage to infrastructures, displacement of people, and loss of lives. The year 2023 was also seen as the start of a strong El Niño that increases the likelihood of below-normal rainfall conditions and will persist until May 2024.

It is evident that the Philippines is exposed to various natural hazards. Nevertheless, as our Minister, Secretary Solidum advocates, we would like to shift our perspective from being “*survivors*” to being “*victors*”. The Philippines’ Department of Science and Technology has recognized the importance of leveraging science, technology, and innovation for disaster risk reduction and management that it has included wealth protection in its DOST Strategic Plan Framework 2023-2028.

This workshop reinforces the Philippines’ steadfast commitment in joining hands with the international community such as the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development or CSTD in providing STI solutions to global challenges and significantly contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The role of science, technology and innovation or STI in building resilient communities has also been a subject of discussion at the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the CSTD in May 2019. The resultant resolution recommended Member States to “*design and implement science, technology and innovation policies and other relevant policies to make them responsive to building resilient communities*”. In support of this, we have initiated to conduct this activity.

In the course of the workshop, we enjoin our participants to actively engage with our speakers, poster presenters, and with other co-participants in showcasing the success stories, best practices, and challenges in utilizing STI in disaster risk reduction in your countries. We hope that at the end of this event, we will be able to formulate at least three policy recommendations that could help not just the CSTD Member States but also its stakeholders and the audience that the UNCTAD publications reach.

It is with no doubt, that through our concerted efforts in implementing international technical cooperation, we could help save the environment and our future generations. Again, welcome, thank you and *Mabuhay!*