



# PHILIPPINES

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## **68<sup>th</sup> Session of UNCTAD Trade and Development Board**

### **Agenda Item 3: General Debate**

22 June 2021

*Delivered by H.E. Evan P. Garcia, Permanent Representative*

Madam President,

The Philippines congratulates you on your election as President of the Board, and thanks Ambassador Villegas for his able leadership in the past months.

The Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered by Afghanistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Pakistan on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group.

In its national capacity, the Philippines adds its voice to growing calls for UNCTAD to assert its centrality in the development sphere.

Our quadrennial conference will take place in a historic moment. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted societies and economies, and the evolving new normal requires fresh approaches to building economic, social, and financial resilience. This demands a meaningful and decisive pivoting to a more effective multilateralism.

The Philippines therefore supports the ambitious aspirations of our conference: Transforming economies through diversification, transforming to a more sustainable and resilient economy, transforming how development is financed, and transforming multilateralism.

The COVID-19 crisis exposed the vulnerabilities of developing countries and the existing gaps in the multilateral development processes. These vulnerabilities underline fundamental inequities among countries, societies, and economies.

It is in this context that the Philippines is particularly invested in reinforcing multilateralism's toolbox to meet the unique challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

By transforming multilateralism, we do not mean revising the rules-based international order that underpins the U.N.-centric multilateral processes. Indeed, we call on all parties to reaffirm these foundational values.

Our call to transform multilateralism proceeds from a recognition of persistent inequity in global economic governance. There is a need to recall the basic premise of multilateralism: It is supposed to be history's great equalizer. It is supposed to affirm the rights and the sovereign equality of all nations, whether big or small. The voice of developing countries must therefore be heard. Their participation in global economic governance must be enhanced.

Madam President,

We must not shy away from undertaking a factual diagnosis of the current state of multilateralism. While globalization has been a force for good, it has also left many behind.

We must uphold UNCTAD as a platform for honest and purposive dialogue to ensure that the rules-based multilateral trading system serves the needs and interests of developing countries. The principle of special and differentiated treatment is sacrosanct, and UNCTAD must help keep it so.

Measures to promote development, including generalized scheme of preferences, must be sustained to support countries, including middle-income countries, as they accomplish the SDG agenda.

Our discourse and advocacies must encompass all vulnerable sectors of society, including older persons, migrants, women, and the youth.

Finally, we must pursue equitable and just global cooperation in addressing the existential threat to our specie, of gravest urgency: climate change.

Madam President,

The challenges facing humanity are complex and multifaceted. This is not the time for protectionism, unilateralism, and any sort of coercive measures that undermines the principle of multilateralism and the rules-based international order. This is the time for collective action, and for inclusive, equitable and development-oriented cooperation.

The quadrennial conference gives us an opportunity to reaffirm these basic values, and we must seize the moment.

Thank you, Madam President.