

## **MESSAGE FOR THE UN WOMEN STAKEHOLDERS' FORUM**

H.E. Mr Libran Cabactulan, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations and Chair-designate of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

***Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Colleagues and Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

It is an honour and privilege to participate at this Stakeholders' Forum on *Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls – The road ahead.*

We only have just a little over a year left to reach the Millennium Development Goals. Yet the world continues to face a myriad of challenges to uplift and improve the plight of the most vulnerable. Women and girls continue to face manifold disadvantages and discrimination. They are disadvantaged, on account of their gender and age and face violence and discrimination. They still are treated as inferior which prevents the full enjoyment of their human rights and results in limited opportunities in the field of health, education, and employment. They continue to be economically and socially disadvantaged because of their limited access to economic resources and opportunities, their exclusion from planning and decision-making, and their disproportionate burden of unpaid work.

Since the adoption of the MDGs in 2000, priorities at the national and global levels have been set towards poverty eradication, environmental sustainability and the protection and promotion of human rights especially of those who are most vulnerable, namely, women and children. While notable efforts have been made for the advancement of women, progress has been uneven and inequalities between women and men persist.

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its 58<sup>th</sup> session in March 2014 (CSW58), will provide all of us stakeholders with an opportunity to assess progress made through the MDG framework from a gender perspective and identify key gender equality issues that need to be addressed as the international community molds its collective vision for

a post-2015 development framework. It will also be an occasion for us to renew commitments made to advance gender equality and empowerment of women.

In this regard, Member states and all stakeholders should seize the opportunity and make full use of the Commission's deliberations to ensure that we come up with a strong outcome containing concrete and practical recommendations to accelerate progress in the achievement of the MDGs for women and girls, and to maintain gender equality and the empowerment of women as a priority in the post-2015 development agenda.

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2015 marks the deadline for the achievement of the MDGs. It also marks the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. We have seen considerable progress that has been made possible through the tireless efforts, commitment and dedication of everyone - Member states, UN agencies, civil society and all stakeholders. Gender inequality, however, has deep structural roots that need to be addressed and which, realistically speaking, may not be easily resolved within a short period of time. We therefore need a concerted action to redouble our efforts and continue building on the strength of the gains we have already achieved while working on closing the gaps that deter us from advancing gender equality and empowerment of women.

Today, we are presented with an opportunity to share experiences, lessons learned and good practices on the challenges and achievements made in the implementation of the MDGs for women and girls. Let us take full advantage of this valuable opportunity and work to send a strong, clear message – not just right here and right now, not just this coming session of CSW in March 2014 nor even 2015, but for 2015 and beyond - that gender equality is a priority and we are all united in advancement of women.

We sincerely thank UN Women for organizing the Stakeholder's forum - it is an invaluable initiative which had greatly contributed to the success of CSW 57. We have

no doubt it will serve the same purpose as we prepare for CSW58 and we look forward to hearing from all stakeholders in the next two days.

Thank you.