

**GENERAL DEBATE STATEMENT OF
SENATE PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA**

Head of the Philippine Congressional Delegation
to the 150th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

“Parliamentary action for social development and justice”

Fellow Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good afternoon.

It is a privilege to stand before you today as we reaffirm our collective commitment to social development and justice – pillars that shape the future of our societies. While global commitments such as the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aim to advance these goals, inequality remains deeply entrenched. Economic disparities persist, climate change exacerbates vulnerabilities and marginalized groups continue to face barriers.

The Philippine Development Report 2024 highlights our steady economic progress, with GDP growth, a declining unemployment rate, and dropping poverty incidence. But while the Philippines has made significant progress, challenges remain in gender equality, climate action, and clean energy access.

We have the power to bridge economic and social gaps, expand social protection for the most vulnerable, and implement policies that foster sustainable and equitable growth. Through collective responsibility, we can translate economic gains into meaningful improvements in the lives of our people.

As the Philippines commemorates 100 years since joining the IPU, we reaffirm our commitment to its ideals, including its aim to promote social development and justice. It is a perfect opportunity to reflect on key legislation which underscores this commitment.

To address poverty eradication and access to essential services, we enacted the National Health Insurance Act to expand healthcare coverage; and the Expanded Senior Citizens Act which provides elderly support. Additionally, the Food Donation Act combats hunger by promoting surplus food distribution.

Equally crucial to social development is ensuring decent and productive work for Filipinos. Thus, we enacted: the Public Employment Service Office Act which connects job seekers to opportunities; the Special Program for Employment of Students Amendment Act which supports working students; the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) Act institutionalizes protection and welfare programs for millions of our overseas Filipino workers. The Philippine Green Jobs Act incentivizes businesses to create jobs for a just transition into a sustainable economy.

On social inclusion, we enacted the following: The Magna Carta of Women upholds gender equality; the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act strengthens protection to victims; and the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities Amendment Act enhances employment, education, and social services access.

Looking forward, ongoing legislative efforts such as the Poverty Reduction Through Social Entrepreneurship Act and the Magna Carta for Workers in the Informal Economy aim to uplift marginalized groups. Meanwhile, the Blue Economy Act and the Sustainable Cities and Communities Act advance climate resilience.

On a larger scale, with the passage of the Loss and Damage Fund Board Act, the Philippines now hosts the Board – a privilege and responsibility in our role in global climate action and finance decision-making.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, the Philippines has contributed actively and steadfastly in promoting its principles and has established itself as a reliable partner, innovative pathfinder and committed peacemaker. In continuation of this commitment, the Philippines has lodged its bid for a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the term 2027-2028.

We pledge to strengthen the rule of law and create an environment for all individuals to live with dignity, respect, and justice and we count on the international community to support our bid in the United Nations Security Council.

As we approach the Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025, let us work toward a new social contract — one that guarantees universal access to essential services, protects workers' rights, and equal opportunities for all.

In closing, Honorable Colleagues, true progress is driven by an inclusive economy that prioritizes well-being, protects natural resources, and ensures equal opportunities for all.

To achieve this, we must empower local economies rather than large corporations; we must transition to a circular economy to ensure progress without environmental harm; and finally, put people first in our economic policies, and create dignified jobs to provide security and a path out of poverty.

Let us legislate with vision, act with urgency, and build a future where no one is left behind.

Thank you and *Mabuhay!*