

**REMARKS OF  
PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.  
FOR THE SPECIAL REMARKS SEGMENT  
OF THE 80<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION  
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP)  
22 April 2024**

*“Leveraging Digital Innovation for  
Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific”*

*The Honorable Under-Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,*

The importance of this session cannot be over-emphasized, especially as the development agenda remains pre-eminent in the current global context that is facing risks and uncertainties in light of rapid economic, technological, and political transformations.

It is now, more than ever, that we need to strengthen digital innovation as it contributes more inclusively to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals across multiple disciplines. We must become champions of digital inclusion, of innovation, interoperability to bridge the digital divide.

Since assuming the presidency in 2022, I have prioritized the enhancement of national development and economic prosperity. Central to this vision is the pivotal role of infrastructure and innovation. We recognized very early on that our future lies in the realm of digital transformation.

One landmark legislation that captures our vision is the *Philippine Innovation Act*. This Act is aimed at a dynamic and resilient ecosystem which is grounded in a culture of innovation. Consequently, the Philippine economy witnessed a robust growth of 7.6% in 2022 – a rate not seen since 1976 – driven by government reforms, high employment levels, and increased investment registration activities.

Today, the digital landscape of the Philippines is rapidly evolving. The swift and massive migration of Filipinos to the digital space presents us with a golden opportunity to harness the full potential of digitalization. Our digital transformation plan is anchored in the *Philippine Development Plan* and the *UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework*.

Both these guiding documents revolve around transformation, with digitalization as a cross-cutting strategy, acting as a catalyst for economic, social, institutional, and environmental metamorphosis.

During the ceremonial signing of our new *Cooperation Framework* with the United Nations in October 2023, I expressed our unwavering commitment to vigorous engagements on critical issues, notably digital transformation. The synergies between the UNSDCF and the PDP aim to advance an enabling environment for economic transformation, harness the potential of our educated and tech-savvy youth, leverage our openness to trade and investment, and benefit from a stable and sustainable national economy.

The aspiration is clear: To evolve into a Smart and Innovative Philippines that is productive, resilient, sustainable, and inclusive. The vision aligns seamlessly with the *Philippine Innovation Act* and the initiatives of the *National Innovation Council*, of which I have the honor of serving as Chair.

In 2023, the Philippines' commendable performance in the *Global Innovation Index* rankings by the *World Intellectual Property Organization* positioned us as an emerging economic power, as well as a regional and global beacon of innovation.

Our steady climb in the rankings, from 100<sup>th</sup> place in 2014 to now 56<sup>th</sup> in 2023, symbolizes our relentless effort to unleash our economic potential and fast-track our trajectory towards upper-middle-income status.

As we continue to sustain our leadership role among middle-income countries, we are pleased to announce the Philippines' hosting of the upcoming *High-Level Meeting* among these countries next year.

Through initiatives, such as our Department of Science and Technology's *Science for Change Program* in 2021, we launched ten (10) new research projects under the *Niche Centers in the Regions for R&D* to focus on priority areas, including health and well-being.

*Excellencies,*

The Philippines as a nation is vulnerable to devastating natural hazards, and is acutely aware of the multidimensional shocks arising from natural calamities, pandemics, and climate-related disasters. In this context, we emphasize targeted investments to nurture sustainable, resilient, and inclusive systems that focus on agricultural value chains, productive infrastructure, technological transformation, digitalization, and the development of green and blue economies.

Our commitment to multilateralism and global solidarity remains unwavering - as we have actually engaged in advancing climate action, disaster risk reduction, and resilience-building efforts across the Asia-Pacific region.

I am pleased to reiterate the Philippines' offer to host the Board of the historic *Loss and Damage Fund*. Hosting this Board in the Philippines, a country that has firsthand experience of nature's devastating capabilities, will epitomize global commitment to inclusivity and ensure that the voices of the most affected countries shape the most urgent global climate policies.

In line with our commitment to multilateralism, we have launched our candidature for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the term 2027 to 2028. This campaign reflects our dedication to uphold the principles of peace, security, and the well-being of all nations.



So as I end, I express my hope and well wishes for the 80<sup>th</sup> Session of the ESCAP to serve as a testament to the power of innovation and digital transformation in driving sustainable development.

I assure you that the Philippines will remain a steadfast partner of multilateralism, regional leadership, and the realization of Sustainable Development Goals.

*Maraming Salamat* and thank you.