

## **Closing Message of Assistant Secretary Leonila T. Baluyut**

Creative AGE for SDGs: Accelerating Growth of MSMEs in the Philippines - Culminating Event  
17 May 2023 | Coro Hotel, 2F Function Room Annex, 8436 Kalayaan cor. Mercado St., Brgy.  
Poblacion, Makati City

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Good afternoon, everyone.

Over the past few years, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have faced various global crises, including health and climate-related challenges. The pandemic alone led to the closure or temporary halt of over 300,000 businesses, affecting around 1.5 million jobs, with the most significant impact in 2020. However, we have observed a gradual recovery of MSMEs since 2021. We recognize the importance of creativity, digitalization, and innovation in navigating external shocks and enhancing MSME resilience.

The Creative AGE for SDGs: Accelerating Growth of MSMEs in the Philippines aims to address internal and external vulnerabilities of MSMEs in the creative industry, making their business models more future-proof. Although we couldn't attend the program sessions, we have learned three key things from the business pitches.

Firstly, within the three piloted creative domains—design and creative services, traditional cultural expressions, and digital interactive media—we heard diverse and promising entrepreneurial journeys and brand stories. Creative MSMEs, involved in manufacturing shoes, clothes, handcrafted jewelry, fashion accessories, creative content, and graphic designs, play a crucial role in enabling innovation.

Secondly, we were impressed by their determination to transform their business models for sustainability. They highlighted the importance of financial, business structure, technology, and manpower resilience.

Thirdly, we understand that creative MSMEs require support from enablers to achieve their goals and become more dynamic and robust.

We sincerely appreciate the presence of representatives from LGUs, DTI regional offices, Philippine Creative Industry Development Council (PCIDC) members, and other MSME-support organizations. Your attendance signifies your commitment to supporting and uplifting creative MSMEs in the Philippines.

The recent passage of Republic Act No. 11904, known as the Philippine Creative Industries Development Act, serves as a catalyst for championing our creative agenda. This comprehensive law outlines interventions for the creative industry, complementing the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028, which emphasizes fostering creative industries and implementing pragmatic approaches to strengthen creative outputs. By leveraging these laws, policies, and lessons learned, we will enhance our customized initiatives for the creative sector. This event marks the end of one phase and the beginning of our next stride towards a vibrant and sustainable MSME and creative sector.

To all MSME enablers and stakeholders present today, let us continue working harmoniously to unleash the economic potential of the Philippine creative industries. Together, we can enhance their resilience amid national and global barriers, accelerating their contributions to local and international sustainable goals.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who joined us today and stayed until the end. Our thanks go to the:

- Fireside speakers who showed us the fruits of partnership with the government
- Representatives from LGUs, DTI Regional Directors and creative focals, PDIDC members, our main partners in this pursuit
- Esteemed pitch panelists for your critique and valuable insights that refines not only the pitches but also business models
- Creative MSME champions for presenting their pitches in an outstanding level and guiding us towards the next steps
- Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) for supporting the launch and implementation of the Creative AGE for SDGs and future activities we have in the pipeline
- Mr. Joel Santos and his team, for implementing the program as the National Consultant and listing our needed future actions

We will stay in touch for the next phase of the program.

Stay safe, and here's to a creative and resilient economy and MSMEs!