

## **Philippine Statement at the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, the Philippine delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In the past decade, the Philippines implemented an innovative and integrated approach to provide safe water and proper sanitation for the whole population. These were geared towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal to reduce the proportion of the Philippine population that do not have access to safe drinking water to 13.2 % by the year 2015. These were also aimed at achieving the MDG target to halve the proportion without access to basic sanitation by 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

The Philippine Government has gone through a wide range of problems to effectively manage the water resources in the country such as extreme weather conditions, increasing demand conflicts and environmental degradation. Water quality in the country has been impaired severely owing to population growth, and misuse of land, among others. Domestic sewage contributes approximately 52% of the population load, while industry contributes the remaining 48%. Most of the watersheds in the Philippines are in critical condition as manifested by such calamities as flashfloods and greater frequency of El Nino phenomenon in some parts of the country. The chronic shortage of water supply in Metro Manila and the countryside has brought to the fore, the increased recognition of the adverse effects of man's activities in the watersheds which has caused erosion and siltation problems in the country's rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Despite the abundant sources water, it is becoming one of the critical resources in the Philippines.

Mr. Chairman,

The water resources sector continues to address policy and operational gaps in water resources management to ensure adequate water supply. The

National Water Forum held on 22 March 2004 called for the immediate adoption and subsequent implementation of the integrated water resources management framework seeking to change the existing water based development-planning paradigm into a more national, integrative, and total approach.

The Medium Term Development Plan 2004-2010 has set a target of 92% to 96% for safe drinking water and 86% to 91% for access to sanitary toilet facility. The general strategy of the water resources including sanitation, as espoused in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan is the adoption of the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) approach that holistically addresses the deficiencies of the sector, not just from the demand side but also from the supply side. It involves the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources within hydrological boundaries, to optimize economic and social welfare, without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems. The IWRM approach requires decision-making process involving the local governments and community-based institutions. The imperatives needed to dovetail all water resources management initiatives include river basin approach, supply optimization, demand management, equitable access of water, improved policy regulatory and institutional frameworks, and inter-sectoral approach to decision making. The IWRM approach has also been adopted in the management of the Laguna de Bay, the largest lake in the country.

Moreover, the Government enacted the Philippine Clean Water Act in 2004 which provides for a comprehensive water management program to protect the country's water bodies from land based sources of pollution such as industries, mining, agricultural operations, as well as community household activities. The Clean Water Act is an important legislation that pursues all issues affecting the state of the country's water quality. Other steps to improve the quality of water, include the implementation of "Beach Ecowatch" in which 57 major beaches are being monitored for water quality, the implementation of "Tapwatch," - a project that aims to ensure the proper use of potable water in depressed areas, and the classification of water bodies to complete the remaining 202 unclassified principal rivers.

Efforts to strengthen the National Water Resources Board have been initiated by the Government through the enactment of Executive Order No. 123 in September 2002. The NWRB acts as an independent economic regulator for the water sector. Hence, increase in private-sector participation

and investment for water resources is expected. A separate agency, the National Anti-Poverty Commission has been tasked to spearhead the Government's plan to provide potable water to waterless communities.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to sustain and mainstream water resource development and management activities, the Philippine Government has considered raw water pricing (RPM) mechanism to promote more efficient allocation and utilization of water to generate revenues that can be used to ensure continuous supply. However, raw water should be priced on its economic value taking into consideration cost recovery and the public willingness to pay. The second initiative was the establishment of an industrial wastewater effluent fee program which primarily aims at increasing effectiveness of water pollution control efforts and also to complement existing regulatory mechanisms. The user fee system was designed to reduce pollutant loading into Laguna de Bay, the largest lake in the country and its tributary rivers by requiring discharges of liquid wastes to shoulder the cost of pollution prevention and abatement into their business decisions and actions. IWRM has also been mainstreamed by equitably providing potable water to the entire country with priority given to "waterless" barangays/municipalities through private sector and private investment.

While the Philippines is yet to fully realize the outcome of the IWRM strategy on a national level, the Laguna de Bay experience showed that this strategy can effectively address issues on water resource management. The different tools it promotes indeed contribute to sustainable use of water resources. However, this initiative should be paralleled with intensified awareness campaign and advocacy activities.

The provision of safe water supply necessitates improvements in environmental sanitation to reduce incidence of water-borne diseases. At present, many poor households remain without access to safe excrete disposal while water districts lack the needed incentives and support to provide and improve sanitation services. A range of low-cost sanitation programs is required as well as long-term investments in hygiene promotion. The Philippines recognized the need to develop a National Strategy for Sanitation to improve access to basic sanitation.

Mr. Chairman,

The initiatives outlined above are some of the wide ranging policy options and actions that the Philippines is undertaking to overcome the obstacles impeding the achievement of water goals and targets agreed in the JPOI. While the challenges are enormous, the Philippines is optimistic that the national policies coupled with regional- and international-supported actions in addressing the challenges on water and sanitation can make crucial difference to water management.