PHILIPPINES

As delivered

STATEMENT

by H.E. FORTUNATO T. DE LA PEÑA
Secretary
Department of Science and Technology

Ministerial Conference on the
Digital Response to COVID-19
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Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

Good evening from the Philippines.

We would like to thank the co-chairs of the Group, the Permanent Missions of Estonia and Singapore, for convening this Ministerial Videoconference.

Just recently, I was able to participate in the High-level Thematic Debate on the Impact of Rapid Technological Change on SDGs and Targets. The Philippines strongly supports the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation launched by the Secretary-General. The Roadmap, with its three important pillars (connect, respect and protect), is an important framework for universal digital cooperation.

The Philippines develops and applies to good use digital technologies that address the challenges brought about by the pandemic. We have developed and used a disease model called FASSSTER or Feasibility Analysis of Syndromic Surveillance using Spatio-Temporal Epidemiological Modeler for Early Detection of Diseases which

was originally for Dengue, Typhoid Fever, and Measles, and is now used to predict COVID-19 transmission and severity through time and space. Thus, enabling the Philippine Government to decide on appropriate interventions through simulation.

Software applications have also been developed and used extensively in monitoring movement in communities and in enforcing policies for a more inclusive approach while ensuring cybersecurity and protective privacy. The private sector, particularly our startup communities, have also contributed significantly. The wide use of Quick Response (QR) codes have helped in the management of Quarantine Control Checkpoints (QCPs), and contact tracing, in the adherence of businesses and institutions to safety guidelines and in helping organizations to resume operations which have stopped during the strict community quarantine.

Smart technologies have also been developed and deployed in the areas of health (such as telemedicine), education (such as distance learning), agriculture (such as urban farming), and in the digitalization of businesses in an environment where physical contact and interaction has been considerably limited. The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) is now looking as to how MSMEs can move faster into the 4th IR stage.

In support of these major shifts involving digital response, the Government, through the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), continues to develop and implement ICT infrastructure and strategic ICT capacity building programs, under the "New Normal", such as enhancing Digital Workforce, Digital Education, and Digital Governance, and strengthening cybersecurity measures.

Co-Chairs,

Due to the pandemic, the world has witnessed the transition of different sectors adopting and developing digital tools and platforms. However, along these innovations, we are also experiencing emerging and evolving issues such as digital divide, cybercrime, fake news, and threats to human rights.

This situation heightens the need for an open, safe, and affordable access to the internet. To ascertain that no one will be left behind, the Philippines would like to promote not just multilateralism but also *multi-stakeholderism.*

The Philippines welcomes the launch of the Global Declaration on the Digital Response to COVID-19 entitled *"Close the Digital Divides: the Digital Response to COVID-19"*. The Philippines ***will co-sponsor*** the subject declaration, which recognizes that the COVID-19 crisis has affected the whole world and has also provided an opportunity to introduce innovative and flexible solutions to increase resilience to crises and ensure sustainable development. We support the ten (10) recommendations that are elaborated in the Declaration to mitigate the effects of the crisis.

We believe that through a strengthened international cooperation, we will survive this global crisis.

Thank you.

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