

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Launch of “2011-2013 Progress of the World’s Women: In Pursuit of Justice”**

**December 8, 2011 4:00 to 7:30 PM**

**The Department of Foreign Affairs Auditorium (DFA), Roxas Blvd, Pasay City**

**\*Sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC), and UN Women**

***OPENING REMARKS OF DR. JACQUELINE BADCOCK***

***Resident Coordinator, United Nations System in the Philippines***

Justice Teresita De Castro<sup>1</sup>,

Undersecretary Laura Del Rosario<sup>2</sup>,

The Hon. Remedios Rikken,

Ambassador Rosario Manalo<sup>3</sup>,

Ms. Shoko Ishikawa<sup>4</sup>

Atty. Sedfrey Ordonez

Esteemed members of the judiciary, and other distinguished guests,

*Magandang hapon sa inyong lahat.*

It is but fitting that just as the world prepares to celebrate International Human Rights Day on Dec. 10, we gather here this afternoon to hear about progress of the world’s women, and to think about ‘women and justice’ -- *kababaihan at katarungan*<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Recently appointed as Chair of the Supreme Court (SC) Committee on Gender-Responsive Judiciary (CGRJ)

<sup>2</sup> Foreign Undersecretary for International Economic Relations

<sup>3</sup> Philippine Representative to the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)

<sup>4</sup> UN Women East and Southeast Asia Regional Office (ESEARO) OIC, Deputy Regional Programme Director

<sup>5</sup> *Kababaihan* means women; *katarungan* means justice.

UN Women's flagship report, "Progress of the World's Women 2011-2012: In Pursuit of Justice," draws our attention to a paradox. While we have witnessed a sea change in the advancement of women's legal rights these past one hundred years, the reality is that for most of the world's women, the laws that exist on paper do not necessarily translate to equality and justice.

Indeed, for the Philippines, the adoption of the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) in 2009 serves as a major turning point that offers a tremendous opportunity as well as a massive challenge to promote, protect and fulfill women's human rights. While the Philippines fares pretty well in several gender equality indicators, there is still so much to be done. In the area of 'women and justice' and 'women in politics,' for example:

- **Justice system remains a male-dominated field. In 2010, only 34% of the total incumbent judges in the first and second level courts, including Shari'a courts were women. No woman chief justice since 1920 (PCW Fact Sheet, 2011).**
- **Women's share of seats in the electoral politics remains short of the global target of 30% (even 50% as per UNCSW). In the 2007 elections only 23% of elected officials are women; 53 out of 236 seats in the Lower House, 4 out of 24 seats in the Upper House (Comelec, 2008).**
- **Women's participation in local governance and political decision-making must be strengthened especially at the sanggunians, where women comprise only 15% of councilors compared to men who comprised 85% (COMELEC, 1992-2001).**
- **Although women dominate the bureaucracy (59% of the total government personnel), they are likely to hold technical and clerical positions compared to managerial and executive posts of men.**

- **Women comprise only the 32% of those granted with Certificate of Land Ownership Agreement (Department of Agrarian Reform, 2009).**
- **Most victims of VAW did not seek help from the male-dominated police force or the social service. They opt to fight back and/or sought help from friends and family (NDHS, 2008).**
- **Laws that advance women's rights and address their pressing concerns remain pending i.e. RH Bill, Kasambahay Bill (for domestic workers), Anti-Prostitution Bill, Marital Infidelity Bill.**

As you know, just last week on November 28, the UN together with the Philippine government launched the new UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2012-2018. We took the opportunity of the UNDAF launch to signify support to the Secretary General's campaign called UNiTE to End Violence Against Women and the Philippine Commission on Women's campaign to 'blow the whistle' to end violence against women (VAW). Violence against Women is a most intense manifestation of discrimination, a most serious human rights violation. One out of five women in the Philippines, aged 15 to 49, experience physical abuse. *Yet how many of these women are enabled to come forward and seek justice? And when they do, how many women come out feeling satisfied that justice has been met?*

Ending violence against women and other systematic forms of women's human rights violation entails large-scale initiatives at prevention. It also requires at equal measure, systematic and determined efforts to make justice available and accessible to victim-survivors.

We at the UN consider 'access to justice' – especially by the most marginalized groups of women – as a most urgent and critical human rights challenge today. It is a pressing issue that is relevant to achieving gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women which are at the heart of a human rights-based approach to development. The new UNDAF 2012-2018 supports these principles through both targeted gender-specific interventions and gender mainstreaming guided by the country's Magna Carta of Women and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, or

CEDAW, as overarching frameworks. We are committed to support and strengthen partnerships here so that, to quote from the UNDAF, “by 2018, capacities of claimholders and duty-bearers are strengthened to promote human rights, inclusivity, integrity, accountability and the rule of law in governance,” and that “the capacities of the government to protect, fulfill and promote the rights of women and girls, especially the marginalized, as defined and guaranteed in the Magna Carta of Women, are strengthened. “

Making justice, or *katarungan*, accessible to even the most ordinary of women, to women living in the most remote areas, to girls just barely out of school – is a daunting challenge that requires concerted effort and collaboration between government and civil society. Progress of the World’s Women report cites examples of such collaboration; it also offers innovative approaches to enable women to access justice. It argues convincingly that where laws are in place and they are properly implemented, attitudes and practices change. The report also shows that well-functioning legal and justice systems can be a vital mechanism for women to achieve their rights. “They can shape society by providing accountability, by stopping the abuse of power and by creating new norms. The courts have been a critical site of accountability for individual women to claim rights and to set legal precedents that have benefitted millions of others.”

I must commend UN Women for producing this comprehensive report on how women are faring, or perhaps, more importantly, how justice is faring for women.

I also congratulate the Department of Foreign Affairs, especially its Gender and Development (GAD) unit, for taking the initiative to host this launch – this sends a strong message that DFA continues to be most concerned about the country’s international commitments to gender equality.

My commendation also goes to the Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC) for co-organizing this event and providing a very important civil society perspective and voice in this process.

Finally, I would like to offer special congratulations and a note of thanks to Justice Teresita De Castro for her appointment as the new Chair of the Supreme Court

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(SC) Committee on Gender-Responsive Judiciary (CGRJ), and for accepting such an exciting and exacting responsibility. Thank you, Justice De Castro, for taking time to join us today; we look forward very much to your keynote address. We look especially to your leadership in strengthening the gender-responsiveness of the Philippine judiciary.

Today we launch an important report on 'women and justice.' But what is important to note is that today is just a launch. The bigger task lies ahead – how this report becomes a useful resource in our effort to address the issue of 'women and justice,' of *kababaihan at katarungan*, of making justice accessible to even the most marginalized of women. Let us work together to accomplish such task, and may this launch serve as a great beginning.

*Mabuhay kayo!*