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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the Philippines***

1. The Committee considered the seventh periodic report of the Philippines¹ at its 14th and 15th meetings,² held on 18 and 19 February 2025, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 30th meeting, held on 28 February 2025.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission by the State Party of its seventh periodic report and the supplementary information provided in the replies to the list of issues.³ The Committee expresses appreciation for the constructive dialogue that it held with the State Party's high-level delegation.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the legislative, institutional and policy measures taken to increase the protection of economic, social and cultural rights in the State Party, such as the adoption of the Safe Spaces Act and the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials Act and the measures mentioned in the present concluding observations.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations**Domestic application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

4. While noting the information provided by the State Party regarding recently enacted legislative measures and policy interventions to protect and uphold economic, social and cultural rights, and citations of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by the Supreme Court, the Committee remains concerned that the direct application of the Covenant by domestic courts, in particular lower courts, continues to remain low.

5. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations that the State Party take all appropriate measures to ensure the protection of economic, social and cultural rights at the constitutional level, to institutionalize writs of amparo concerning the Covenant rights and to ensure that those rights are protected by the domestic courts at all levels, and that the State Party enhance training for judges, lawyers and public**

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-seventh session (10-28 February 2025).

¹ E/C.12/PHL/7.

² See E/C.12/2025/SR.14 and E/C.12/2025/SR.15.

³ E/C.12/PHL/RQ/7.



officials on the Covenant.⁴ In this regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant.

National human rights institution

6. The Committee is concerned that the Commission on Human Rights (Philippines) does not have a founding charter or an explicit mandate to monitor economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee remains concerned about the limited financial resources allocated to the Commission, which prevents it from fully discharging its mandate, including receiving and processing complaints from victims of alleged human rights violations (art. 2 (1)).

7. **The Committee recommends that the State Party create a founding charter for the Commission on Human Rights, including with an explicit mandate to monitor economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation that the State Party ensure that the Commission is allocated sufficient resources, with the autonomy to plan and manage its own budget,⁵ to enable it to discharge all its duties effectively and independently and in full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and guarantee its independence. In this regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 10 (1998) on the role of national human rights institutions in the protection of economic, social and cultural rights.**

Independence of the judiciary

8. Noting the information provided by the State Party, the Committee is concerned about reports of instances of pressure, threats, intimidation and intervention by public officials in the judicial system, at the national, regional and municipal levels.

9. **The Committee recommends that the State Party safeguard, in law and in practice, the full independence, impartiality and safety of judges and prosecutors and prevent them from being influenced in their decision-making by any form of undue political pressure, violence, threats or corruption.**

Human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers working on human rights

10. The Committee remains concerned about reports that human rights defenders, environmental defenders, journalists and lawyers working on economic, social and cultural rights have been subjected to reprisals as a result of their work, including “red tagging”, financial sanctions, threats, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, and that the Anti-Terrorism Act has been used as justification for such actions.

11. **Recalling its statement on human rights defenders and economic, social and cultural rights,⁶ the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Expedite the adoption of the human rights defenders protection bill, which includes specific provisions that the Government is responsible for protecting human rights defenders;**

(b) **Strengthen the protection of human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers working on economic, social and cultural human rights, as well as their family members;**

(c) **Ensure that all violations are promptly, effectively and impartially investigated, that those responsible are appropriately prosecuted and, if found guilty, punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence and that victims obtain redress and full reparation;**

⁴ E/C.12/PHL/CO/5-6, para. 6.

⁵ Ibid., para. 10.

⁶ E/C.12/2016/2.

(d) **Refrain from using counter-terrorism legislation to limit and repress the freedom of expression, assembly and association of government critics, human rights defenders and journalists, as also recommended by the Human Rights Committee.⁷**

Business and economic, social and cultural rights

12. Noting the information provided during the dialogue with the State Party, the Committee is concerned by the inadequacy of legal obligations for businesses under the State Party's jurisdiction to exercise human rights due diligence, including the absence of a national action plan for business and human rights. The Committee is also concerned about reports that environmental and proprietary impact assessments and consultations with affected local communities in the context of special economic zones and mining, logging and development projects are often insufficient and fail to prevent violations of obligations under the Covenant (art. 2 (1)).

13. **Recalling its general comment No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the Covenant in the context of business activities, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Adopt a national action plan for business and human rights in consultation with civil society, including with a view to ensuring that businesses exercise human rights due diligence to avoid or mitigate any negative impacts of their activities on economic, social and cultural rights;**

(b) **Enact the pending Corporate Social Responsibility Act (Senate bill No. 2355 and No. 2722 entitled "An act encouraging corporate social responsibility, providing incentives therefore");**

(c) **Ensure that business entities, including their suppliers, are held accountable for violations of economic, social and cultural rights, paying particular attention to Indigenous Peoples' and peasants' land rights, environmental impacts and expropriation in the context of establishing and operating special economic zones, mining, logging, and real estate and infrastructure projects;**

(d) **Ensure that follow-up and monitoring mechanisms are put in place to investigate and sanction business entities for their activities that violate economic, social and cultural rights;**

(e) **Ensure that victims of violations by businesses of economic, social and cultural rights have access to effective complaint mechanisms and affordable and effective remedies, including judicial remedies and adequate reparation.**

Rights of Indigenous Peoples

14. Noting the information provided by the State Party regarding measures taken, and their impact, since the last review of the State Party, in 2016, the Committee remains concerned about:

(a) The unsatisfactory implementation of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act as regards the demarcation and registration of Indigenous Peoples' territories;

(b) The ineptitude of the State Party at upholding the right to free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples for any change to the use of their lands and territories and implementing the mandatory representation of Indigenous Peoples in local decision-making bodies;

(c) The displacement of Indigenous Peoples, in particular those in Mindanao, owing to armed conflict and intertribal conflicts, as well as resource-extraction and logging operations;

(d) The limited access of Indigenous Peoples to healthcare, education and other basic services (arts. 1, 2 (1), 12 and 13).

⁷ [CCPR/C/PHL/CO/5](#), para. 14 (e).

15. Recalling its general comment No. 26 (2022) on land and economic, social and cultural rights, its previous recommendations⁸ and the fact that the State Party is a signatory to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Implement effectively the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act in order to simplify the process of recognition of Indigenous Peoples and their customary lands;
- (b) Expedite efforts to guarantee the right of Indigenous Peoples to own, use, control and develop the lands, territories and resources that they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired;
- (c) Repeal or otherwise amend legislation that undermines the right of Indigenous Peoples to land use and/or excludes their participation in decision-making on all matters that affect them;
- (d) Take all measures necessary to guarantee that prior consultations are conducted in a systematic and transparent manner in order to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples in the context of decisions likely to affect them, notably before the granting of licences for development projects and business activities, in particular logging and plantation and mining activities, in the lands and territories that they have traditionally possessed, occupied or used;
- (e) Adopt appropriate measures to mitigate the impact of armed conflicts, intertribal conflicts and natural disasters on Indigenous Peoples;
- (f) Take all measures necessary to ensure the full access of Indigenous Peoples to healthcare, education and other basic services;
- (g) Consider ratifying the International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).

Climate change mitigation

16. While noting the information provided by the State Party regarding its first submission of its nationally determined contributions regarding its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Committee is concerned that current industrial policies, including liquefied natural gas projects, and emission-reducing policies may not be sufficient for the State Party to fulfil its obligations under the Paris Agreement, as emission-reduction goals consist mostly of conditional commitments, rendering reductions dependent on fluctuating international assistance. The Committee is also concerned about the increased deforestation in recent years, as well as a continued reliance on fossil fuels in the State Party's energy mix.

17. Recalling its statement on climate change and the Covenant,⁹ the Committee recommends that the State Party take measures to achieve its nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement by, *inter alia*:

- (a) Updating and adjusting its nationally determined contributions to reduce its conditional commitments and increase its non-conditional emission-reduction targets;
- (b) Designating the Verde Island Passage a protected area under the Expanded National Integrated Protected Area System Act;
- (c) Increasing its efforts to obtain assistance from international partners with a view to obtaining and securing funding for emission-reduction targets that are conditional;
- (d) Increasing taxation on emissions and developing alternatives to fossil fuels by expanding the use of renewable energy such as geothermal, wind and solar energy, including by increasing tax deduction incentive schemes;

⁸ E/C.12/PHL/CO/5-6, para. 13 (a) (b), (d) (e) and (f).

⁹ E/C.12/2018/1.

(e) **Stopping the practices of illegal logging and ceasing, to the extent possible, other non-sustainable uses of natural resources, including forests.**

Corruption

18. While noting the information provided by the State Party regarding efforts to combat corruption, the Committee reiterates its concern that corruption remains pervasive in all branches of government, and in the wider public sector. It is also concerned about reports that anti-corruption bodies, such as the Office of the Ombudsman, and the Commission on Audit lack sufficient financial and technical resources to effectively investigate all allegations of corruption (art. 2 (1)).

19. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Promptly, independently and impartially investigate and prosecute all cases of corruption, in particular high-level corruption, including corruption in the Government and the judiciary, and, if a person is convicted, apply penalties commensurate with the seriousness of the offence;**

(b) **Ensure the effectiveness of anti-corruption bodies by immediately providing them with sufficient human, technical and financial resources to enable them to effectively and independently discharge their mandates.**

Maximum available resources

20. The Committee is concerned that the State Party’s “no new taxes” policy narrows the tax base and limits revenue potential by excluding, *inter alia*, taxes on wealth and luxury goods, thereby limiting the fiscal space for social spending and education, as well as the State Party’s overall ability to finance policies aimed at improving economic, social and cultural rights (arts. 2 (1), 9, 13 and 14).

21. **Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the principle of leaving no one behind, the Committee recommends that the State Party increase its tax-to-gross domestic product ratio and review existing tax policies with a view to increasing their redistributive effect, increase the budget dedicated to social spending and education and generally improve the State Party’s capacity to mobilize domestic resources for the full realization of economic, social and cultural rights.**

Non-discrimination

22. Noting the information provided by the State Party regarding the enactment of a range of anti-discrimination measures, including in employment, the Committee remains concerned about the lengthy delay in adopting a comprehensive anti-discrimination law and about reports of discrimination against persons based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (art. 2 (2)).

23. **Recalling its previous recommendation¹⁰ and its general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights, the Committee recommends that the State Party expedite the adoption of the pending comprehensive anti-discrimination law, which prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on any grounds in all areas covered by the Covenant. The Committee also recommends that the State Party expedite the passage of House bill No. 4982, an anti-discrimination bill also known as the sexual orientation and gender identity expression bill, ensuring that all persons enjoy the rights covered by the Covenant without discrimination.**

Internally displaced persons

24. The Committee is concerned about the limited enjoyment of certain economic, social and cultural rights by internally displaced persons, including insufficient access to adequate housing, healthcare, education and other basic services, as well as the non-fulfilment of their right to return (arts. 2 (2) and 11–14).

¹⁰ [E/C.12/PHL/CO/5-6](#), para. 20.

25. **The Committee recommends that the State Party pursue its efforts to protect internally displaced persons and guarantee their enjoyment of the rights covered under the Covenant, in particular by ensuring the provision of adequate housing, healthcare, education and other basic services, as well as ensuring their right to return.**

Equality between men and women

26. While noting the information provided by the State Party regarding measures to increase the participation of women in the labour market, the Committee remains concerned that there continues to be a large gender disparity in labour market participation, mainly owing to persistent gender stereotypes and the unequal sharing of family responsibilities between women and men. The Committee also remains concerned about the large gender pay gap owing to the predominance of women in low-skilled and low-paid jobs (arts. 3, 6 and 7).

27. **Recalling its general comment No. 16 (2005) on the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights, the Committee reiterates its previous recommendation¹¹ and recommends that the State Party develop policies to reduce the burden of women's unpaid domestic and care work by promoting the sharing of family responsibilities between men and women, as well as policies to ensure gender parity in higher positions in both the public and the private sectors.**

Right to work

28. Noting the reduction in the size of the informal economy since the previous review of the State Party, the Committee remains concerned that bills on formalizing informal work and the informal economy, including the Magna Carta for workers in the informal economy, as well as proposed measures to address the issue of "contractualization" (widespread use of short-term contracts), remain pending in the State Party's legislature, resulting in a substantial part of the workforce working in the informal economy or in non-standard forms of employment who are not covered by labour laws or the social protection system, in particular in rural and peripheral areas (art. 6, 7 and 9).

29. **Recalling its previous recommendation,¹² the Committee recommends that the State Party expedite the adoption of pending legislation and measures to facilitate the transition of workers from the informal to the formal sector of the economy, in particular in rural and peripheral areas, and that it earmark and increase the transfer of federal funds to regional and local administrations for this purpose.**

30. The Committee notes the overall trend in recent years of a continuous reduction in unemployment. However, the Committee remains concerned that, although the State Party's data-collection system does not allow for a clear assessment of labour market participation, unemployment and underemployment, the available information indicates a continuous significant level of general underemployment in the labour market, mainly owing to the shortage of decent job opportunities and a mismatch between supply and demand (arts. 3, 6 and 7).

31. **Recalling its previous recommendation¹³ and its general comment No. 18 (2005) on the right to work, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Improve its data-collection system, including by collaborating with international partners, such as the United Nations Development Programme, ILO and international financial institutions;**

(b) **Address mismatches between education and labour market needs through further enhancing the quality of technical and vocational training and education and continue strengthening the national technical and vocational education and training system to align skills and qualifications with the labour market, focusing on the**

¹¹ Ibid., para. 24.

¹² Ibid., para. 28 (a) and (c).

¹³ Ibid., para. 26.

requirements of the people most affected by unemployment so that they can earn a living with work that they freely choose or accept.

Right to just and favourable conditions of work

32. The Committee is concerned about reports that the impact of the adoption of Act No. 11058 on occupational safety and health standards, including with regard to sweatshops, has been insufficient, resulting in continued precarious working conditions in sweatshops, including pay below legal minimum wages, long working hours and unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, as well as exposure to abuse and sexual harassment, in particular for women (arts. 3, 6 and 7).

33. **Recalling its general comment No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work, the Committee reiterates its previous recommendation that the State Party:**

(a) **Ensure that labour legislation is strictly applied to sweatshop workers and that all workers enjoy safe and healthy working conditions and are protected from occupational accidents, exploitation and abuse;**

(b) **Strengthen the mandate and resources of labour inspectorates to enable them to effectively monitor working conditions in all work settings.¹⁴**

34. The Committee is concerned about the existence of 46 different minimum wages in the State Party, reportedly creating a lack of transparency that impairs workers' ability to ensure that they receive their wages. The Committee is also concerned that three minimum wage rates are not above the 2018 poverty threshold, that minimum wages are generally low and that there is still not full compliance with minimum wages (art. 7).

35. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation that the State Party:**

(a) **Review the Wage Rationalization Act of 1989 with a view to reinstating the national minimum wage;**

(b) **Take the steps necessary to ensure that all workers are covered by minimum wages and that minimum wages are regularly adjusted to the cost of living and to reinforce employers' compliance with the minimum wages through labour inspections and complaint mechanisms, ensuring that those who fail to pay minimum wages are sanctioned with penalties commensurate with the offence.¹⁵**

Trade union rights

36. The Committee is concerned that the following articles in the Labor Code of the Philippines impose restrictions on the right to form and join trade unions that may be in violation of the Covenant (art. 8):

(a) Article 240 (c), under which unions must meet a membership threshold of 20 per cent of all the employees in the entity in order to organize;

(b) Article 244 (a), which stipulates a threshold of 10 local unions or chapters recognized as collective bargaining agents in order to register a federation or national union;

(c) Article 278 (g), which stipulates that the Secretary of Labor and Employment may assume jurisdiction over a dispute and decide it.

37. **The Committee recommends that the State Party amend articles 240 (c), 244 (a) and 278 (g) of the Labor Code to ensure their alignment with the Covenant. In that regard, the Committee recommends that the State Party cooperate with relevant stakeholders at the national level, including civil society organizations and the Commission on Human Rights, and, if necessary, seek technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and ILO.**

¹⁴ Ibid., para. 28 (d) and (e).

¹⁵ Ibid., para. 30 (a) and (c).

38. The Committee is concerned about reports of persecution (“red tagging”), harassment, killings, enforced disappearances and other violence against trade union members, and that the State Party has not effectively investigated and prosecuted those responsible for such acts, reportedly as a result of government and police inaction. The Committee is also concerned about reports of corporate repression of trade unions and anti-union discrimination, including union busting and violations of the right to strike. The Committee is further concerned about reports that the effectiveness of mechanisms mandated to monitor violations of freedom of association and union rights is insufficient to prevent and punish such violations (art. 8).

39. **Recalling its joint statement with the Human Rights Committee on freedom of association, including the right to form and join trade unions,¹⁶ the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

- (a) **Strengthen the protection of trade union activists from any kind of threat, harassment, kidnapping, torture, enforced disappearance and killings;**
- (b) **Ensure that all violations are promptly, effectively and impartially investigated, that those responsible are appropriately prosecuted and, if found guilty, punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence and that victims obtain redress and full reparation;**
- (c) **Take all measures necessary to ensure the enforcement of legislation related to anti-union discrimination;**
- (d) **Increase the penalties for violating the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike, including with a view to deterring such violations.**

Right to social security

40. While noting the progress made by the State Party in expanding its social security system and raising the social protection floor, the Committee is concerned that a significant number of persons are not yet covered by the social security system, including workers in the informal economy, persons belonging to the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups, in particular people in street situations, and older persons (art. 9).

41. **The Committee recommends that the State Party expand its social security scheme to include basic universal social guarantees and that it redouble its efforts to guarantee universal coverage and provide sufficient benefits for all persons, in particular those in the informal economy, those belonging to the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups and older persons, to ensure that they have a decent standard of living. In this regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 19 (2007) on the right to social security and its statement entitled “Social protection floors: an essential element of the right to social security and of the sustainable development goals”.¹⁷ The Committee encourages the State Party to ratify the ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102).**

Protection of the family and children

42. The Committee remains concerned that a high number of children continue to be subjected to child labour, including in hazardous conditions (arts. 7 and 10).

43. **Recalling its previous recommendation,¹⁸ the Committee recommends that the State Party take urgent measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, strengthen labour inspection mechanisms with a specific focus on child labour and ensure that the laws on child labour are rigorously enforced.**

¹⁶ E/C.12/66/5-CCPR/C/127/4.

¹⁷ E/C.12/2015/1.

¹⁸ E/C.12PHL/CO/5-6, para. 38.

Poverty

44. While noting the explanation provided by the State Party and acknowledging the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on its economy, the Committee regrets that the poverty level has not been reduced below 15.5 per cent, as recorded in 2023, in particular in the light of the approximately 35 per cent growth in the State Party's gross domestic product since the review of the State Party's fifth and sixth periodic reports, in 2016. The Committee is concerned that, despite anti-poverty measures such as the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (conditional cash transfer programme), the rates of poverty and extreme poverty remain particularly high among Indigenous Peoples and among disadvantaged and marginalized populations (arts. 1, 2 (2), 9 and 11).

45. **The Committee recommends that the State Party intensify its efforts to combat poverty, in particular extreme poverty, by, among other things, increasing the resources allocated to and undertaking a thorough evaluation of existing programmes and strategies to identify obstacles and make the changes necessary to achieve desired poverty reduction targets, including targeting Indigenous Peoples, people living in rural and deprived urban areas, women and girls, persons with disabilities and ethnic and religious minorities, paying particular attention to integrating human rights. In this regard, the Committee recalls its statement on poverty and the Covenant.¹⁹**

Right to food

46. While noting information provided by the State Party regarding efforts made to strengthen food security, the Committee remains concerned about the high rates of malnutrition and child stunting in the State Party. It is also concerned about persistent challenges such as poverty, the limited availability of nutritious food and the impacts of climate change and disasters on agricultural production, which result in disparities in access to and the affordability of nutritious food, in particular in rural and remote areas (art. 11).

47. **Recalling its previous recommendation²⁰ and its general comment No. 12 (1999) on the right to adequate food, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

- (a) **Develop a comprehensive national strategy for the implementation of the right to adequate food and a national framework law covering all policy areas relevant for this implementation;**
- (b) **Redouble its efforts to enhance food security in the regions most affected by hunger and malnutrition by investing in local agricultural production, providing support such as seeds, greenhouses and livestock, and improving the resilience of subsistence farming and female-headed households through income diversification and disaster preparedness;**
- (c) **Continue and strengthen its cooperation and coordination with the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations;**
- (d) **Accelerate the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program and increase the security of land tenure for the most vulnerable groups;**
- (e) **Protect maritime and fishing resources in coastal waters for artisanal small-scale fisheries against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.**

Climate change adaptation

48. While noting the information provided by the State Party regarding various climate adaptation measures such as the National Climate Change Action Plan 2011–2028 and local climate change action plans, the Committee is concerned about the State Party's insufficient measures to counter its relatively high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events such as floods and droughts, and long-term changes from sea level rise, shifts in rainfall patterns and increasing temperatures. The Committee is also

¹⁹ E/C.12/2001/10.

²⁰ E/C.12PHL/CO/5-6, para. 48.

concerned about reports that development projects, including land reclamation projects, exacerbate these vulnerabilities (art. 11).

49. **The Committee recommends that the State Party finalize the development of its national adaptation plan, taking into account the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged groups, in particular Indigenous Peoples and affected communities, and that it incorporate adaptation measures for climate change that respect economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee also recommends that the State Party take all measures necessary to protect coastal communities and densely populated areas from rising sea levels and potential flooding, including by thoroughly reviewing existing and planned development projects such as, for example, land reclamation projects in Manila Bay.**

Right to physical and mental health

50. The Committee is concerned about disparities in the quality and availability of healthcare services between urban areas and rural or remote regions and between Indigenous Peoples and the general population, and about generally inadequate healthcare infrastructure (arts. 1, 2 (2) and 12).

51. **Recalling its general comment No. 14 (2000) on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

- (a) **Decrease disparities in healthcare by improving the coverage and quality of essential health services, in particular for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups living in rural and remote areas;**
- (b) **Take measures to improve healthcare infrastructure, in particular in rural and remote regions, including through the construction, upgrading and subsequent continuous funding of hospitals, clinics and health centres.**

Drug policies

52. While noting the information provided by the State Party, the Committee remains concerned about the State Party's overall punitive approach to drug use and about reports of wide-scale human rights abuses by law enforcement officers in the context of the "war on drugs" such as, for example, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of alleged drug dealers and people who use drugs. The Committee notes that the Philippine Anti-Illegal Drugs Strategy does not have harm reduction services (art. 12).

53. **Recalling its previous recommendation,²¹ the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

- (a) **End its "war on drugs";**
- (b) **Promptly, independently and impartially investigate and prosecute all cases of human rights abuses in the context of the "war on drugs" and, if a person is convicted, apply penalties commensurate with the seriousness of the offence;**
- (c) **Review its drug policies and legislation to bring them into line with its international obligations, international human rights norms and best practices, including the implementation of adequate treatment and rehabilitation programmes and voluntary harm reduction services for people who use drugs.**

Sexual and reproductive health

54. The Committee remains concerned about the absolute prohibition of abortion in the State Party. This ban subjects women and girls who seek abortions, as well as healthcare professionals who assist them, to criminal penalties, as well as exposing women and girls to serious risks to their lives and health due to recourse to unsafe abortions, which is widespread. The Committee is also concerned about reports of harassment, discriminatory practices and abuse of patients seeking post-abortion care. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about

²¹ Ibid., para. 54.

insufficient access to sexual and reproductive health services, in particular in rural areas and for the most marginalized groups, exacerbated by ongoing restrictions on access to reproductive health services.

55. Recalling its general comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health, as well as paragraph 8 of general comment No. 36 (2018) of the Human Rights Committee on the right to life, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Amend its legislative and institutional framework to ensure effective and safe access to abortion, at a minimum in cases where the life or health of the pregnant woman or girl is at risk, when the pregnancy results from rape or incest and in cases of severe fetal anomalies rendering the pregnancy non-viable, and decriminalize abortion;
- (b) Repeal criminal sanctions imposed on women and girls who undergo abortions, as well as on healthcare providers who assist them, in order to end dangerous clandestine practices and ensure respect for women's rights to bodily integrity, autonomy and dignity;
- (c) Ensure the availability and accessibility of high-quality sexual and reproductive health services, including post-abortion care in conditions of confidentiality and without discrimination, paying particular attention to women living in rural areas, women in poverty, women with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and members of ethnic or religious minorities;
- (d) Collect and analyse data disaggregated by age, region and socioeconomic status on the prevalence of unsafe abortion and its impact on women's health, including maternal mortality, to assess the consequences of current restrictions and guide public policies on reproductive health, taking into account the World Health Organization abortion care guideline.

Right to education

56. The Committee is concerned that provisions in Act No. 12027, on discontinuing the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction, enacted in 2024, may constitute a retrogressive measure in the field of education, including regarding provisions stipulating that the medium of instruction is to revert to Filipino and English, while the mother tongue will serve as "auxiliary media of instruction" in kindergartens (arts. 2 (2) and 13).

57. The Committee recommends that the State Party consider reviewing Act No. 12027, on discontinuing the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction, with a view to ensuring that various mother tongues throughout the State Party may be permitted as the medium of instruction in kindergartens.

58. While noting the increase in school enrolment, completion rates and decreased school dropout rates in recent years, the Committee is concerned about the insufficient quality of education at all levels, in particular for children with disabilities, Indigenous children and children from families living in poverty, and their relatively high school dropout rates. The Committee remains concerned about the insufficient level of resources allocated by the State Party to financing school facilities and qualified teachers and to ensuring the effective enjoyment of the right to free primary and secondary education for all (arts. 1, 2 (1), 13 and 14).

59. Recalling its general comment No. 13 (1999) on the right to education and its previous recommendation,²² the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Develop and implement a comprehensive policy to ensure inclusive education, increase enrolment and address the relatively high rates of dropout among students with disabilities, Indigenous children and children from families living in poverty;

²² Ibid., para. 56 (a).

(b) Enhance the quality of education, in particular in remote areas, and address low educational outcomes, including through sustained investment in training and improved working conditions and salary increases for teachers;

(c) Improve school infrastructure and learning materials and ensure that all schools have access to electricity and sanitation;

(d) Expand the availability of preschool education, guaranteeing de facto universal and free access to basic education for all, in particular in rural areas.

Internet access

60. While noting the continuous increase in access to the Internet in the State Party, the Committee remains concerned that access to the Internet continues to be limited among disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups and in rural areas, and about the disparity in such access between low- and high-income households (art. 15).

61. The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation that the State Party continue working to narrow the digital divide by expanding Internet access, in particular for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, as well as for low-income households.²³

D. Other recommendations

62. The Committee encourages the State Party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

63. The Committee recommends that the State Party consider ratifying the core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party, namely the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

64. The Committee also recommends that the State Party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level, including in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, with international assistance and cooperation when needed. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would be significantly facilitated by the State Party establishing independent mechanisms to monitor progress and treating beneficiaries of public programmes as rights holders who can claim entitlements. Moreover, the Committee recommends that the State Party support the global commitment of the decade of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementing the Goals on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination would ensure that no one is left behind. In this regard, the Committee draws the State Party's attention to its statement on the pledge to leave no one behind.²⁴

65. The Committee further recommends that the State Party take steps to progressively develop and apply appropriate indicators on the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in order to facilitate the assessment of progress achieved by the State Party in complying with its obligations under the Covenant for various segments of the population. In that context, the Committee refers the State Party to, *inter alia*, the conceptual and methodological framework on human rights indicators developed by OHCHR.²⁵

66. The Committee requests that the State Party disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, throughout the regions, in particular among

²³ Ibid., para. 58.

²⁴ E/C.12/2019/1.

²⁵ HRI/MC/2008/3.

parliamentarians, public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee emphasizes the crucial role that parliament plays in implementing the present concluding observations and encourages the State Party to ensure its involvement in future reporting and follow-up procedures. The Committee encourages the State Party to continue engaging with the Commission on Human Rights, non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the follow-up to the present concluding observations and in the process of consultation at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.

67. In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State Party is requested to provide, within 24 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations (31 March 2027), information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 13 (a) (national action plan for business and human rights), 17 (b) (Verde Island Passage) and 35 (a) (minimum wage) above.

68. The Committee requests the State Party to submit its eighth periodic report in accordance with article 16 of the Covenant by 31 March 2030, unless otherwise notified as a result of a change in the review cycle. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words. In addition, it invites the State Party to update its common core document, as necessary, in accordance with the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties.²⁶

²⁶ [HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6](#), chap. I.