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DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMY, PLANNING, AND DEVELOPMENT

INTERVENTION

ARSENIO M. BALISACAN, PhD

Secretary, Department of Economy, Planning, and Development
Republic of the Philippines

Ministerial Round Table

*“Shaping Future Governments: Achievements and Challenges in the
Global South”*

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Excellencies, fellow ministers, distinguished colleagues,

It is a pleasure to join this Ministerial Round Table on *Shaping Future Governments*, at a time when countries of the Global South are exercising greater agency and influence in global affairs, and assuming more prominent roles in shaping the international agenda.

Allow me to share the Philippine perspective along three dimensions: first, our approach to international engagement; second, our role in shaping global consensus on sustainable development; and third, the institutional measures we have undertaken to support a more effective global role. I will conclude with a brief reflection on digitalization as a key driver of future government modernization.

First, on international engagement.

The Philippines approaches global affairs as an active and principled participant, anchored in the conviction that multilateralism remains the most viable platform for addressing complex and transboundary challenges. In an increasingly fragmented international environment, cooperation grounded in international law, equity, and dialogue is not optional—it is essential.

This commitment is most clearly expressed through our leadership within ASEAN, particularly as the ASEAN Chair for 2026. Under our chairship, ASEAN engagements are being convened under the theme “Navigating the Future, Together.” This theme captures our shared understanding that the region must respond collectively to geopolitical uncertainty, economic transformation, technological disruption, and climate risks.

As Chair, the Philippines is working to strengthen ASEAN unity and centrality, advance practical cooperation on regional resilience, sustainable growth, and digital transformation, and reinforce ASEAN’s role as a stabilizing and constructive force in an increasingly multipolar Indo-Pacific. Our approach emphasizes dialogue, consensus-building, and concrete outcomes—principles that have long underpinned ASEAN’s relevance and credibility.

Beyond ASEAN, the Philippines continues to uphold an open, inclusive, and rules-based international order. We consistently prioritize diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of disputes, and we engage actively in multilateral fora through a whole-of-government approach, ensuring coherence and credibility in our international participation. We are also contributing to emerging areas of global governance, including peace and security in outer space, where we hosted the first ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on this issue in Manila in 2025.

Second, on shaping international consensus on sustainable development.

Our international engagement is not an end in itself. It is a means to a more fundamental objective: ensuring that growth, security, and stability translate into tangible benefits for people, particularly in developing and middle-income countries.

From this perspective, the Philippines has been deeply engaged in advancing global discussions on inclusive growth, sustainable development, and climate action. In 2025, we emerged as a regional and global hub for inclusive dialogue by hosting the High-Level Conference of

Middle-Income Countries, which culminated in the Makati Declaration. This initiative helped advance a shared call for tailored and scaled-up support for middle-income countries that continue to face structural vulnerabilities despite economic progress.

We have also promoted innovative and science-based approaches to sustainability, including by hosting the IAEA High-Level Forum on Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution, which convened global experts to explore scalable solutions to environmental challenges. Beyond hosting, the Philippines remains actively engaged in global platforms such as the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the Financing for Development process, and the World Summit for Social Development. Across these fora, we consistently advocate for greater access to finance, policy flexibility, and concessional support for developing and middle-income countries during a period of overlapping global crises.

As a climate-vulnerable country, the Philippines has also taken on a leadership role in advancing concrete solutions on loss and damage. In 2025, the government legislated the Loss and Damage Fund Board Act, or Republic Act No. 12019, which granted the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage full juridical personality and legal capacity within the Philippines. This enables the Fund to enter into international agreements, manage global assets, and operate with legal certainty, effectively positioning the Philippines as a functional hub for international climate finance governance.

Third, on institutional measures to support global engagement.

We recognize that credibility in global forums must be matched by coherence, capacity, and legal readiness at home. For the Philippines, this has required deliberate institutional and legislative reforms to ensure that our international commitments are not merely declaratory, but are fully supported by domestic authority, coordination mechanisms, and accountability structures.

We have operationalized a whole-of-government approach through inter-agency mechanisms that align mandates, promote policy coherence, and enable coordinated responses to complex international and development challenges. Importantly, through the enactment of Republic Act No. 12019, we have also demonstrated our willingness to legislate for effective global engagement. By granting the FRLD Board juridical personality and legal capacity within our jurisdiction, we strengthened continuity, predictability, and trust for international partners and stakeholders.

We have further advanced open government reforms, including hosting the Open Government Partnership Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting in 2025, which reinforced regional cooperation on transparency, participation, and accountability—key foundations for institutional credibility in global affairs.

Looking ahead, these institutional foundations must be complemented by digital transformation. For the Philippines—an archipelago with diverse development conditions—digital connectivity is not simply a technology issue; it is a governance imperative.

The government has adopted the National Digital Connectivity Plan 2026–2037, a long-term roadmap aimed at closing digital divides, strengthening resilience, and enabling inclusive growth. The plan entails a total investment requirement of nearly US\$97 billion, mobilizing both public and private resources to expand broadband infrastructure, improve network reliability, and ensure nationwide access, particularly in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

This investment underpins digital government platforms, data-driven policymaking, improved public service delivery, and deeper participation in the global digital economy. For countries of the Global South, digitalization will increasingly determine who can participate meaningfully in emerging value chains—and who risks being left behind.

In closing, the Philippine perspective underscores a simple but important lesson: global influence today is built at the intersection of principled diplomacy, inclusive development, strong institutions, and digital readiness. For governments of the Global South, the challenge is not only to grow faster, but to govern better—so that our expanding influence translates into shared prosperity, resilience, and trust, both at home and internationally.

Thank you very much.