

The Philippine Government would like to present, at the Voluntary Dialogue on the GCM during the GFMD 2019 Summit, its experiences on the national implementation of the GCM, its efforts to provide policy coherence at various levels, and focus in particular on:

- "Objectives 21 Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration; and*
- Objective 22. Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits"*

The Philippine Government is of the view that uncertainty is one of the major "roadblocks" for migrants who may otherwise consider safe return and reintegration. Returning migrants face a significant concern: after having spent their most productive years abroad, migrant workers in many cases seek to defer a return home due to the prospects of unemployment, and the uncertainty of retirement. Many migrants who have completed their work arrangements abroad return home, bearing the debilitating impacts of physical and mental health conditions, suffering chronic illness, or the usual challenges that come with age - making them less employable and less able to engage in new enterprises.

The Philippine Government is working towards building mechanisms that would facilitate dignified return, productive reintegration, and portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits, to address this gap.

There are many responses to these challenges. The Philippines would like to present two of the many on-going programs that are being pursued to address these "roadblocks" to return and reintegration that migrants face:

*1. **Upskilling:** The Philippine Government, through its consulates and embassies, works with the national professional licensing authority, the Professional Regulatory Commission, and skills assessment authority Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, to allow Filipino nationals working abroad, who otherwise qualify for professional licensing and skills certification, to complete their examinations and accreditation while abroad. In some cases, the Philippine Government has also negotiated mutual recognition of skills, to allow migrants to "upskill" during their deployment, and secure better employment opportunities. Existing mutual recognition of technical and vocational skills can be discussed. In the case of teachers, the Philippine Government, through the coordination of the Department of Labor and Employment and the Department of Education cooperate on the completion of the professional licensing requirements of migrants who have training as educators, but are underemployed abroad. The purpose is so that they can return to the Philippines with secure placements in the public education system. The One-Stop shop of the Department of Labor and Employment for placing returned migrants into gainful employment can also be discussed.*

*2. **Portability of benefits:** negotiate access to, and portability of, social services, security and health care, that would facilitate the enjoyment of benefits earned by migrants abroad on their return to the country of origin. The portability of benefits, whether in the context of government*

to government social security agreements, or through solutions from other sectors, would enrich the appreciation of GCM Objective 22.

Since the early 1980s, the Philippines, with the Social Security System as the implementing agency, has pursued the establishment of social security agreements (SSAs) with countries that host Filipino migrants. Provisions of these international treaties are compliant with the standards set under 1982 ILO Convention No. 157 on the Maintenance of Social Security Rights with respect to persons working or residing outside their own country. There are four salient features of these agreements aimed at reducing or eliminating nationality-and territory-based restrictions on social security:

- Equality of treatment, which entitles a covered worker to social security benefits under the same conditions as nationals of the host country
- Export of benefits, which allows a covered worker to continue receiving his social security benefits wherever he decides to reside, whether in the Philippines, the host country or even in a third country
- Totalization of insurance periods, which provides for combining creditable periods of covered workers under the social security schemes of the Philippines and the host country, to determine eligibility to benefits and manner of calculation of benefit payment (usually on a proportional-sharing basis); and
- Mutual administrative assistance, which facilitates coordination between social security institution/s of the Philippines and the host country, through their designated liaison offices, to extend assistance to covered workers and handle matters pertaining to implementation of the agreement.

Apart from the above salient features, SSAs coordinate the Philippines' social security programs with the comparable programs of other countries. As such, these address problems on dual coverage (coverage under the systems of two countries for the same work) and dual payment of contributions. At present the Philippines has SSA with thirteen (13) governments, mostly Europe, Canada and Japan. The Philippine Government aims to negotiate SSAs in all regions that host large numbers of our nationals, in the hope that portability of benefits will re-assure our migrants that returning home is a viable option. For the purposes of the panel in Quito, the Philippines may consider partnering with one of the governments we have an active SSA with, to demonstrate that the implementation of SSA from the perspective of a country of origin and a host country, is a positive step for the protection of migrants.

The Philippine delegation to the GFMD 2019 submits, for the consideration of the Chair, the above topic for discussion at the Dialogue on 22 November 2019 in Quito. END