

## High-level project launch: Environmental-Economic Accounting for Evidence-based Policy in the Philippines

- Dear Dr. Mapa, Chief Statistician, Under-Secretary General and Civil Registrar
- Dr Merci Sombilla, Under-Secretary General from the National Economic and Development Authority,
- Mr. Gonzalez, UN Resident Coordinator
- Dear friends at the Philippines Statistics Authority, past and present
- Dear colleagues from UN DESA Statistics Division and across the statistical community

Thank you for the opportunity to join you at the launch of this important initiative: Environment-Economic Accounting for Evidence based Policy Making.

My name is Gemma Van Halderen and I lead the ESCAP Statistics Division based in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Philippine Statistics Authority is a leader in our region. You have embraced a modern legislative and institutional arrangement for statistics, civil registration and more recently the Philippines Identity System. Your experiences are routinely sought out from across the region in areas as diverse as big data, vital statistics, economic statistics and disaster-related statistics. And we must thank you also for embracing the National SDG Tracker tool recently launched by ESCAP.

I wish to personally thank you Dr. Mapa for giving freely of your time and the time of your staff to contribute to our Asia-Pacific Stats Café series and Asia-Pacific Statistics Week amongst others.

The Philippines Statistics Authority is also influencing global agendas. Dr Mapa is a member of a High Level Group on Partnerships, Coordination and Capacity Building for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which is looking across all aspects of the 2030 Agenda and how to support Government meet their commitments.

Today's launch of the Environmental-Economic Accounting project is another example of your leadership and commitment to high quality official statistics for national policy priorities. And I am really pleased the project is focussing on both technical and institutional challenges which I know countries face in producing high quality and regular environmental-economic accounts.

In my own country of Australia, environmental-economic accounts have taken a while to be accepted as a regular feature of the official statistics ecosystem. But today they are used across many government policies – for land, for energy, for water. And just recently, the Australian Government announced a major investment in environmental-economic accounts for oceans.

Philippines too have a long history of environmental-economic accounting, dating back to 1991. You were one of the pioneers in our Asia-Pacific region. You have also been extremely active as a Member of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting and in the development and piloting of the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism.

You are a role model for other countries in the region and globally. I am confident this new project, launched today, will lead to further evidence for policy makers as well as further lessons which you can share with your friends, our friends, across Asia, the Pacific and globally.

Finally, I would like to thank our good friends and colleagues at the UN DESA Statistics Division for launching this project not only in the Philippines but in Asia and the Africa. It is through these projects

that the UN Development System builds capacity and ensures the world is transformed and no one is left behind. The setting and implementation of global statistical standards, frameworks and classifications would not be possible without the efforts of DESA. Ms Alessandra Alfieri, thank you for your commitment throughout our region to advancing environmental-economic accounting.

Congratulations once again for the launch of the Environmental-Economic Accounting project, the best of luck to you and please stay safe and healthy.