

All set for the new Philippine Development Plan

*By Atty. Jose Ferdinand M. Rojas II
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ON February 20 the Neda Board approved the 2017-2022 Philippine Development Plan (PDP), which is based on AmBisyonNatin 2040, the Filipino people's collective vision and aspirations for themselves and for the country. It is also linked to President Duterte's 10-point Socioeconomic Agenda. The PDP is the result of integrated efforts from the Neda, Cabinet secretaries and technical working groups from various agencies. It is inspired, too, by ideas and input from different stakeholders and the public, in general.

So now the Filipino people have this plan that Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III has described as close to a masterpiece. "It is unlike any other medium-term development plan I have read," he said. Next step would be for the Neda to draft an executive order that will instruct all agencies to align their programs and activities with the PDP.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia said, "By the end of 2022, Filipinos will be closer to achieving their long-term aspirations. Through this PDP, the current administration will lay a solid foundation for inclusive growth, a high-trust society, and a globally competitive knowledge economy by grounding its development thrusts on *malasakit, pagbabago at patuloynapag-unlad*."

7 parts of the PDP and targets

The entire plan has seven parts: Overview of the Economy, Development Challenges, Development Strategies explained in various chapters: Enhancing the Social Fabric, Inequality-Reducing Transformation, Increasing Growth Potential, Enabling and Supportive Economic Environment, and Foundations for Inclusive and Sustainable Development.

As far as targets are concerned, it is largely specific, but all leading toward the general goal of making the Philippines an upper-middle class income country by 2022. Some of the specific objectives include (a) GDP growth at 7 percent to 8 percent; (b) decline of poverty rate from 21.6 percent to 14 percent; (c) decreased poverty incidence in rural areas, from 30 percent (2015) to 20 percent by 2022; (d) reduction of unemployment rate from the current 5.5 percent to 3 percent to 5 percent. Included also are difficult-to-measure targets, like higher trust in government and society, more resilient individuals and communities, and a greater drive for innovation.

How to reach targets

The plan includes strategies based on the three main pillars: *malasakit, pagbabago* and *patuloynapag-unlad*. The first pillar involves the promotion of anticorruption measures, improvement of the public sector's productivity, implementation of regulatory reforms, increased access to legal aid, pursuance of corrections reforms, and the promotion of culture-sensitive governance and development.

Under the second pillar, the plan is to expand opportunities in agriculture and increase the country's presence in the global economic market. It also includes the streamlining of processes

for local and foreign investors, supporting strategies to improve basic education for the people, enhancing disaster risk reduction and management mechanisms, and the adoption of universal social protection.

The third pillar involves maximizing the demographic dividend and advancing science, technology and innovation. To do this, the administration plans to maintain macroeconomic and financial stability, and to observe fiscal prudence while the tax system is being reformed. According to the Neda, “a strategic trade policy will also be implemented alongside measures to promote competition and establish a level playing field.”