

# PRESS RELEASE

## Philippines Hosts the 7<sup>th</sup> BIMP-EAGA Statistics and Database Working Group Meeting

Date of Release: 19 July 2024  
Reference No. 2024-230



*Key officials in the 7<sup>th</sup> SDWG Meeting: (From left to right) Mr. Md Adib Bahzi Majid (DEPS), Ms. Stefanie Intan Christienova (BPS), Ms. Siti Haslinda binti Mohd Din (DOSM), Dr. Susan Pudin (FC), Mr. Bahrum Kadun (DEPS), Usec. Janet M. Lopez (MinDA), Asec. Divina Gracia L. del Prado, PhD (PSA), Mr. Romeo L. Castañaga (DTI Region XI), Mr. Benjamin Arsenio Y. Navarro, MNSA (PSA), Atty. Maqtahar L. Manulon, CESO V (PSA).*

The 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) Statistics and Database Working Group (SDWG) was held in Davao City from 16 to 18 July 2024. Established in 1994, the BIMP-EAGA initiative aims to promote development in remote and less developed areas of the four participating Southeast Asian countries. In the Philippines, Mindanao and Palawan are key members of this sub-regional group. The SDWG plays a crucial role by providing data support to foster development and guide policies within BIMP-EAGA.

The meeting was attended by key officials, including Mr. Bahrum Kadun, SDWG Chair and Acting Director of Statistics of the Department of Economic Planning and Statistics (DEPS) – Brunei Darussalam, accompanied by Statistics Officer Md Adib Bahzi Majid; Ms. Stefanie Intan Christienova, Senior Statistician from the Directorate of Statistical Dissemination of Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) Indonesia; and Ms. Siti Haslinda binti Mohd Din, Director of the International Trade Statistics Division of the Department of



Statistics Malaysia (DOSM); and Dr. Susan Pudín, Head of the BIMP-EAGA Facilitation Center (FC).

The Philippine delegation included Assistant Secretary Divina Gracia L. del Prado, PhD, Deputy National Statistician of the Sectoral Statistics Office of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA); Atty. Maqtahar L. Manulon, Regional Director of PSA Regional Statistical Services Office XII; Mr. Benjamin Arsenio Y. Navarro, Director of the International Cooperation Unit; and the Regional Directors of the Philippine-EAGA regions. The PSA was also privileged to host officials from the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA), including Secretary Leo Tereso A. Magno, Undersecretary Janet M. Lopez, Assistant Secretary Romeo M. Montenegro, and Mr. Romeo L. Castañaga, Regional Director, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Region XI.

Assistant Secretary del Prado welcomed participants and underscored the vital role of the working group in advancing the sub-region's vision. She highlighted the significance of comprehensive and timely statistics in monitoring progress, evaluating achievements, and informing future strategies. Undersecretary Lopez, in her address, reaffirms the vital role of data in shaping policies that will advance the BIMP-EAGA. The SDWG Chair acknowledged the group's progress and emphasized the critical importance of accurate and reliable data for policymakers, investors, and businesses.



*(Left) Asec del Prado, (Center) Usec. Lopez, and (Right) SDWG Chair Kadun deliver opening messages, setting the tone for the meeting.*

A welcome dinner hosted by the PSA and MinDA showcased the vibrant culture and cuisine of the Davao Region. In a speech delivered by Secretary Magno, he highlighted the group's relevance in supporting BIMP-EAGA's development, particularly in Mindanao. The evening concluded with a cultural performance courtesy of the Department of Tourism.

During the meeting, the group discussed major outputs and projects, including the annual publication of the statistical information brief, the sub-regional database, and the development of a Core Indicator System. Looking ahead, the SDWG envisions a strengthened and more visible role in supporting the BIMP-EAGA initiative.



*(Top) Sec. Magno delivers a message during the welcome dinner. (Bottom left) BIMP-EAGA delegates meet with Sec. Magno. (Bottom right) A cultural presentation offers a glimpse into the rich traditions of the region.*

*- International Cooperation Unit, Office of the National Statistician*

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