PHILIPPINES

Statement by
Deputy Permanent Representative Enrique A. Manalo
Before the First Committee, 10 October 2002, 57th UNGA, New York

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to join the others in congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. My delegation is convinced that your vast experience shall steer us to a fruitful and meaningful conclusion of the First Committee’s work this year. We pledge to you and your Bureau my delegation’s full support and cooperation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Undersecretary-General Dhanapala and his team at the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs for their efforts in furthering the cause of disarmament. Undersecretary Dhanapala’s statement has given us a comprehensive and up-to-date view of where we stand on disarmament issues at this time.

My delegation also associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by Myanmar on behalf of ASEAN.

My delegation also wishes to welcome the newest members of the United Nations – Timor-Leste and Switzerland.

Mr. Chairman,

Recent developments on the issues of nuclear proliferation and disarmament paint a mixed picture. In this regard, my delegation notes recent promising developments such as:

1) the signing by the United States and Russia of the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Arms Reductions, which significantly reduces the two countries’ strategic nuclear weapons;
2) Cuba’s decision to accede to the NPT as well as to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean;
3) the continued increase in signatures and ratifications of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty; and
4) the agreement of Central Asian states to conclude a treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon free zone. In this connection, my country sees nuclear weapons-free zones not only as instruments for nuclear non-proliferation but also as important contributions to nuclear disarmament. In our own
region, we remain hopeful that fruitful negotiations with nuclear powers on the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone could lead to its full implementation in the near future.

On the other hand, we view with concern the lack of progress in the multilateral arena of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We share in the expressions of disappointment over:

1) The failure of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to agree on its program of work for the last six years, stalling negotiations on important disarmament issues such as the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty;

2) Notwithstanding the continued increase in signatures and ratifications, the failure of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to enter into force. In this regard, the Philippines joins the call for the remaining states, in particular those whose ratification is needed for its entry into force, that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible;

3) The difficulty of moving on with nuclear disarmament under the NPT process as the collective and unequivocal commitment by the Nuclear Weapon States for a transparent, accountable and verifiable elimination of nuclear arsenals which was regarded with much promise two years ago after the 2000 NPT Review Conference has largely been unrealized. Furthermore, total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons can only be realized with the universal adherence to and implementation of the NPT.

4) The much delayed convening of the fourth Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). In this regard, much work has already been done over the years in this Committee and in the Disarmament Commission on the agenda and objectives of SSOD IV. Let us build on this, mindful of the fast developing events in the international peace and security situation.

Mr. Chairman,

We note your statement on the “unfinished agenda of eliminating biological and chemical weapons”, and support the call for compliance with the requirements for the verified destruction of weapons stockpiles to ensure elimination of these weapons. My country also urges universal membership in these two Conventions.

Mr. Chairman,

The abovedicited disappointing realities, seemingly daunting, should serve as a challenge to our work in this Committee. The events of 9/11 makes more urgent the implementation of many of the practical measures identified in the resolutions presented at this session.

The delays in concrete progress towards eliminating nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, referred to as a “crisis in multilateral disarmament diplomacy”, now
require priority attention in the aftermath of 9/11. Terrorist acts, especially with the possible use of weapons of mass destruction, threaten international peace and security. At the same time, policies to counter terrorism also influence international peace and security. My delegation believes that now, more than ever, it is imperative to strengthen negotiations in the multilateral disarmament arena to respond to the threats posed by global terrorism.

As we try to unravel the stumbling blocks faced in implementing most of the international disarmament agreements, it is time to remind ourselves of our common objective. That is, to make the world a safer place now and in the future by eliminating these destructive weapons. Perhaps focusing on a common end will narrow the differences in the approaches.

Mr. Chairman,

International peace and security are equally threatened by deceptively small weapons – small arms and light weapons, and land mines. The recognition of the security, humanitarian and development consequences of the proliferation and abuse of small arms and light weapons which led to the adoption of the Program of Action by the 2001 United Nations Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons is today considered as a significant step in the right direction on disarmament.

In this regard, the Philippines hosted a Regional Seminar on Implementing the UN Programme of Action in July 2002, co-sponsored by Canada, where delegates from eight ASEAN countries, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, and Australia participated. Observers from some EU countries and the USA also participated. The discussions in the Seminar were greatly enriched by the participation of representatives from civil society and the arms industry which my country, as host, invited.

The Philippines recognizes that conditions and circumstances vary in each region and there are particular challenges which are best addressed through regional approaches.

The co-Chairmen’s report of the Seminar contained principles for developing a regional arrangement to deal with the problems of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It also recommended thirty-two practical measures which it proposed to submit for consideration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for a possible regional arrangement. We look forward to sharing the Seminar’s results during the Biennial Meeting of States Parties to the UN Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons next year.

[I wish to briefly inform this meeting of the principles drawn up during the seminar for implementing the UN Programme of Action in Southeast Asia.

- Respect for and commitment to international law and the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.
o A balanced, realistic and implementable arrangement with the primary objective of ensuring that arms transfers are authorized solely by States in order to prevent them from being acquired by illegal entities.

o An arrangement should take into account the right of each state to manufacture, import and retain SALW for its self-defense and security needs, as well as for its capacity to participate in peacekeeping operations in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and

o An arrangement should take into account the role played by civil society in raising awareness of the danger associated with the illicit trade in and uncontrolled proliferation of SALW; the partnership between state and civil society should be encouraged and enhanced.]

Simultaneous to the Seminar, a symbolic “Arms Destruction Ceremony” was held to coincide with the first anniversary of the 2001 UN Conference. More than one thousand confiscated, seized and surplus small arms and light weapons were destroyed during the ceremony.

Mr. Chairman,

Relatively, I note the importance of the United Nations Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific as an important forum for addressing the common disarmament goals of our region. The operations of the Centre should therefore be continued and I take this opportunity to thank its Director for his participation and contribution to the meaningful outcome of the Regional Seminar on Small Arms and Light Weapons which was hosted by my country.

Mr. Chairman,

Finally, my delegation wishes to commend and encourage the interest and efforts of civil society to contribute to the debate on disarmament issues. Their interest in keeping our world safe through disarmament is just the same as ours. Their unbounded ideas enrich the discussions in the disarmament forum.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.