TRANSFORMING COMMITMENT INTO ACTION

H.E. DR. ALBERTO G. ROMULO
Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines

General Debate, 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
3 May 2010, United Nations, New York

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His Excellency, Ambassador Libran Cabactulan, President of the Review Conference;
His Excellency, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations;
Distinguished Delegates, Good Morning.

Changed New World, Same Old Fears

The Cold War has long ended, but its tragic legacy of fear and mistrust abounds and lingers. A wave of democracy and hope has since swept the world. But weapons of mass destruction continue to pose grave threats to humanity. Advances in technology and communication have brought nations closer. Yet mistrust and suspicions have kept their peoples apart.

We have indeed changed the world, but the threat to our future remains undiminished. Nuclear weapons have slipped the cordons of the nuclear powers and into the arsenals of countries which bode ill for peace. Non-state actors have shown ruthlessness and blatant disregard for life which becomes even more frightening with the thought they might one day wield nuclear armaments.

Since 1968, the non-proliferation treaty has been the reason John F. Kennedy’s nightmare vision of 15 to 20 nuclear states has been avoided. Instead, there are less than 10 - the original 5 plus probably four to five more. It is these additions that makes urgent the imperative to close the treaty loopholes that makes it possible for countries to legally acquire bomb-making skills and equipment under the guise of civilian nuclear program.

That is the challenge and opportunity before us in this historic conference.

In our changed world, a danger to one is a danger to all. No nation can remain unaffected by the events in any other country or another region.

Nothing conceived by man can match nuclear weapons in its sheer destructive force – it is the most inhumane weapon ever created.
Deliberately wielding these weapons would be catastrophic. Unleashing its power by accident would be beyond tragic. It is perhaps by sheer luck that neither have befallen us.

But how long will our luck hold out? In this race between cooperation and catastrophe, we all know who the clear winner should be.

**Our Resolution on the Middle East**

No nation or its people can be safe from these weapons.

For a country like the Philippines, with over a tenth of its nationals spread across the globe, the dangers posed by nuclear weapons are particularly stark.

In the Middle East alone, there are two million Filipinos.

The Philippines firmly believes that promises made in past agreements must be kept. Among the most crucial of these promises is the need to realize the 1995 Resolution in the Middle East and the establishment of a nuclear weapons free zone in that region.

Fulfilling the promise could help usher in peace and stability in a region that has known neither.

**Dialogue and Diplomacy Over Deterrence**

We will not be able to sustain our efforts towards nuclear disarmament unless fundamental changes are made on how some nations address their security concerns.

Nations much learn to rely more on developing friendships than on the cold steel of their weapons.

Finding comfort in deterrence has been a great hindrance to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Many states still live under the protection of decades-old nuclear umbrellas. Others are giving in to the temptation of having their own nuclear protective parasols.

We must find a way to wean nations away from their reliance on deterrence.

For lasting peace and security, we must replace deterrence with diplomacy.
I call on the five nuclear-weapons states to carry out existing commitments to irreversible cuts in their nuclear arsenals, and to do so in a transparent and time-bound manner.

With the historic changes in our world, Cold War adversaries should now be disarmament disciples.

I call on others who possess these weapons to abandon them now. And for those who hope to possess these weapons, do not give in to its siren call.

We are at a Turning Point

We are at a crucial turning point. There have been many developments that have improved the environment for progress in our Review Conference.

Now, more than at any other point in the history of the NPT, is the moment to firmly place the world on the road to freedom from these weapons.

The Review Conference meets at a time of renewed hope that major gains can be achieve in nuclear disarmament.

The current global climate presents the best opportunity for our Review Conference to make progress in the field of nuclear disarmament. The momentum has been building solidly behind efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The Review Conference must take advantage of this rare opportunity.

On the multilateral front, nuclear disarmament is once again taking center stage on the agenda of the United Nations.

Among the reasons nuclear disarmament is once more at the apex of our collective work in United Nations is the leadership and determination shown by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's.

He is driven by a sentiment that many of us share – the world is over-armed, and development is under-funded. He has pointed out that spending on weapons worldwide is now well above one trillion dollars a year – and rising.

We agree that these priorities should be reversed and that by accelerating disarmament, we can liberate the resources we need to combat climate change, address food insecurity and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
Through his five-point plan, the Secretary-General has shown how this can be done in the area of nuclear disarmament. With this plan, he has not only presented a clear roadmap, but has also animated broad discussion on nuclear disarmament.

Two weeks ago, General Assembly President Abdussalam Treki convened a special Thematic Debate on disarmament. It was a timely gathering and helped add momentum in favor of the success of the Review Conference.

Just last week, the States Parties and Signatories to nuclear weapons free zone agreements met for the second time in five years and threw their strong support behind the success of our review conference.

Even as established multilateral fora gather in support of the work of nuclear disarmament, new one are helping pave the way to eliminating nuclear peril.

At the Nuclear Security Summit last month in Washington, aside from agreeing to work together to address nuclear security and to prevent the illicit trafficking of nuclear materials, world leaders also reiterated their commitment to nuclear disarmament.

On the bilateral front, the cause of nuclear disarmament received a major boost when the United States and Russia sealed a new START Treaty – a huge leap in the right direction towards reduction, and hopefully, total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The United States and Russia has shown a willingness never before seen to reduce their arsenals. Their commitment provides a new opportunity – the first since these weapons ended World War II – to turn back the nuclear tide.

Fresh new policy tracks from the current administration of the United States are particularly heartening. These have inspired a leading international news magazine to write that these are the accomplishments of a statesman who dreamt 27 years ago, of bringing the wisdom of “Thoreau, Jefferson, and Whitman to bear on the twisted logic” of the nuclear arms race.

On the national front, the recent policy changes adopted by the United States in its Nuclear Posture Review also helps set the stage for greater advancement towards a world without nuclear weapons. Fundamental to any progress in nuclear disarmament is lesser reliance on these weapons.

Special groups, caucuses and commissions have been mobilizing to bring their full weight to bear on the side of nuclear disarmament. The Philippines appreciates the work undertaken by these groups which have contributed substantive ideas and concepts which have certainly carried forward our process, among them, the New Agenda Coalition, the De-Alerting Group, and the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament.
The Philippines shares the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, and is committed to ensuring that nuclear energy is used only for peaceful purposes. We take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to realizing the objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in a comprehensive manner. We believe that there should be equal progress on all three pillars of the Treaty, namely non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

**Nuclear Disarmament**

The vast majority of states have adhered to the NPT. They have every justification to believe that the Nuclear Weapon States should not only take greater disarmament measures, but should offer security guarantees to enhance the global security climate.

Article VI of the NPT clearly calls on the Nuclear Weapon States to pursue nuclear disarmament, yet it does not set timelines or benchmarks.

With timelines having been left out of the NPT, I believe that it is up to the States Parties, through the Review Conference, to determine realistic and clearly defined benchmarks for nuclear disarmament and specific timelines for the Nuclear Weapon States to accomplish what they promised. A promise without a term is a difficult promise to keep.

The Philippines believes that the *Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty* (CTBT) provides a crucial complement to the NPT towards achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The CTBT’s early entry into force will also provide a critical boost to global efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons. Being one of the 13 Practical Steps agreed upon by States during the 2000 Review Conference, the Philippines is committed to working in various regional and multilateral fora towards the early entry into force of the CTBT.

The NPT has a synergistic relationship with other critical disarmament processes. Progress made in this Review Conference will certainly help to bolster the work of the *Conference on Disarmament* (CD).

It was hoped that the CD by this time could have approved its Program of Work and commenced its efforts in earnest for the crafting of a *Treaty on Fissile Materials*, a vital element in the overall nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. During our Review Conference we must find ways to reinvigorate the work of the CD.
Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Even as we take on the task of nuclear disarmament, we must also face the undeniable reality that proliferation is a danger and that serious efforts must be made to end it. To do so, however, we must act together through ways and means that we can all uphold. This means that we must strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and we must fully respect its safeguards. Impartiality and the avoidance of double-standards are essential for those objectives.

Although the NPT takes a global approach to nuclear non-proliferation, it does not discount the role that regions can play in complementing this approach. Nuclear weapons free zones further strengthen the nonproliferation and disarmament norm, and reduce the geographic area in which nuclear weapons can be stationed or used.

The Philippines strongly supports the establishment of nuclear weapons free zones as a way to contribute to international peace and security.

We share with others the vision of a world covered in nuclear free zones and that one day there will be nowhere in the world where these weapons will be welcome.

As its contribution to achieving peace and stability in Southeast Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, established the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. We encourage the nuclear weapon states and other partners in the region to accede to the SEANWFZ treaty.

The Philippines considers the Additional Protocol, along with the comprehensive safeguards agreement, as important elements of the IAEA’s safeguards and verification system.

The increase in the number of additional protocols in force, along with the conclusions and entry into force of comprehensive safeguards agreements, are of particular importance for the NPT Review Conference as they signal an affirmation by States of the importance of establishing confidence in the peaceful nature of nuclear activities.

We, therefore, call on States that have not done so to bring additional protocols in force in order to bring the Agency closer to its milestone of 100 additional protocols in force.

Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

The Philippines reaffirms the inalienable right of States Parties to develop, research, production and use of nuclear energy without discrimination and in conformity with the provisions of the Treaty. But claims to unqualified rights to nuclear energy,
without adequate checks and safeguards, are dangerous, do not contribute to the cause of non-proliferation and should be seriously resisted and rejected.

The Philippines supports the IAEA’s technical cooperation program, which assists States Parties, particularly developing countries, in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We believe that the Agency’s technical cooperation program contributes in an important way towards helping countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals as well as fulfilling the objectives set forth in Article IV of the Treaty.

The IAEA serves as a vanguard of the non-proliferation regime. It is therefore important that the Agency’s nuclear verification capability is strengthened. Providing the Agency with the legal tools and resources to effectively implement a credible verification system will go a long way in reducing the risk of nuclear proliferation, thereby contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security.

In view of the global nuclear renaissance, with some sixty (60) countries commencing or indicating their interest to pursue national nuclear power programs, safety and security considerations will also increase and should be commensurately addressed.

While energy is a key element for socio-economic development, it is important to bear in mind that we all bear a responsibility to ensure the safety, security and well-being of our citizens.

As one of the countries considering the inclusion of nuclear power in its energy mix, the Philippines recognizes the critical importance of nuclear security and considers it as an “enabler” rather than a constraint in the utilization of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

In this regard, the Philippines recognizes the key role of the IAEA in supporting its Member States in strengthening their national capacities in nuclear security.

The issue of nuclear safety is of critical concern to the Philippines, as it was a major factor in our decision to mothball our nuclear power program more than twenty years ago.

We note with satisfaction that since then, international cooperation, particularly through the IAEA, has continued to advance efforts towards improving nuclear safety and has made available a number of important tools, including safety standards and guidelines, self-assessment mechanisms, peer reviews and advisory services.

While we recognize the dramatic developments in this area, there is still widespread caution and skepticism on the use of nuclear power. Therefore, efforts to strengthen the nuclear safety regime and to educate the public about it should be sustained.
The Philippines reiterates its support for a multilateral approach to the nuclear fuel cycle with the IAEA having a central role.

We believe that a multilateral framework would benefit States by providing options for the assurance of supply and services for their nuclear facilities, while serving as an important tool for strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

We believe that the consultation process should continue to help clarify issues and address outstanding concerns, and wish to reiterate the importance of addressing this issue in a transparent and open-ended manner.

It is important that the resulting mechanism or mechanisms should ensure that equal access to nuclear fuel should be guaranteed and that these will not unnecessarily lead to a monopolistic control by any Member State or group of states over nuclear fuel supply.

**Strengthening of the NPT Regime**

The NPT was and still is a major and historic document on nuclear disarmament. It enshrines legally binding commitments and truly is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

For all the great tasks before it, and unlike other important international conventions, the NPT does not have dedicated institutional support.

Ultimately it is the political will of states that decide whether a treaty succeeds or fails. It is the strength of their commitment to the treaty, and not the institutional support behind it, that will make states carry out their obligations.

However, even the most basic institutional support can help states parties. There are several proposals on how to help strengthen the review process by adopting institutional mechanisms and these should be seriously considered during this Review Conference.

There are several proposals on how this can be done and these should be looked at and seriously considered during this Review Conference.

**Universality**

But perhaps more importantly, the NPT regime will be far stronger and more resilient when it has achieved universality. I take this opportunity to reiterate the call for States that have not yet done so, to become States Parties to this crucial agreement.
I would also like to strongly encourage those who might be considering leaving the NPT, to exert every effort to work out what ever differences they may have with others over the treaty or its interpretation.

**Giving Life to the NPT**

The Philippines deeply appreciates the trust that has been placed on us to lead this critical gathering.

We take on this responsibility firm in the belief that international peace and security is the concern of all, and that among the gravest threats facing our common humanity is the existence of nuclear weapons.

Every year, billions of dollars go to nuclear weapons research and arsenal maintenance, as much as $30 billion, by some estimates. How much of that money could have gone to preventing disease, alleviating hunger and giving millions the chance to have a future, we can only imagine.

For 2010, the World Food Program, the world's largest humanitarian organization, has projected a shortfall of 75% of its requirements. A fraction of what is spent on nuclear weapons could readily erase that shortfall.

When countries continue to spend lavishly on weapons of mass destruction, mortgaging our children's future and letting people die of disease and hunger, then clearly there is still much that we must do towards making our planet a free and peaceful world.

I believe that all of us continue to stand by the principles that gave life to the NPT.

It is my hope that here in our Review Conference Delegations will be willing to extend maximum flexibility in the negotiations.

We must be prepared to focus on the task at hand, and open to not allowing politics and misunderstandings to stand in the way of our success.

Here in the midst of new hope for a world free from nuclear weapons, we must continue to transform our words and our commitments into actions.

Thank you.