



PHILIPPINES

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PHILIPPINE STATEMENT BY

H.E. LAURO L. BAJA, JR.
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

at the General Debate of the **FIRST**
COMMITTEE OF THE 58th SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 10 October 2003

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Permanent Representative

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First Committee, New York, 10 October 2003

Mr. Chairman,

We join other delegations in congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and the other members of your bureau. The Philippine delegation is confident that your vast experience will guide this year's work of the First Committee to a productive and meaningful conclusion.

May we also take this opportunity to welcome to the First Committee the new Undersecretary General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe.

My delegation associates itself with the ASEAN statement to be delivered by Myanmar later and would now just like to briefly refer to points of national interest in the following statement.

Mr. Chairman,

The Philippines shares the concern of other delegations over the lack of progress in the multilateral arena of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We are particularly concerned over the following:

First: the difficulty of moving on with nuclear disarmament under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It is indeed disappointing to note that three years after the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the collective and unequivocal commitment by Nuclear Weapon States for a transparent, accountable and verifiable elimination of their nuclear arsenals remains largely unrealized. The decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to withdraw from the NPT and restart its nuclear weapons development program is a further cause for concern;

Second: the failure of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to enter into force despite its ratification by a growing number of countries. The Philippines echoes its call for states, particularly those

whose ratification is needed for the treaty to enter into force, to sign and ratify the treaty as soon as possible if they still have not done so;

Third: the unsuccessful efforts in the Conference of Disarmament (CD) to arrive at an agreement on its program of work for the past seven years. This has stalled negotiations on important disarmament issues such as the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT); and

Fourth: the continued lack of consensus on the objectives and agenda to convene the Fourth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). This, despite the discussions held over the years in the Disarmament Commission. It is indeed lamentable that there has been no progress in arriving at a consensus to move on ahead with the convening of the Fourth Special Session devoted to disarmament.

These concerns in the arena of disarmament and non-proliferation have further been aggravated by the growing possibility of terrorist actions that may involve the use of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Chairman,

The above-cited realities may seem daunting but these should not prevent us from effectively pursuing our work in the First Committee.

The Philippines remains convinced that for us to respond effectively to these concerns, we would need to strengthen negotiations in the multilateral arena. We also reiterate our view that by focusing on a common end, we narrow the differences in our approaches.

Mr. Chairman,

The Philippines remains steadfast in its commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

As part of this commitment, the Philippines:

- (1) signed in April 2003 a Facility Agreement with the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in Vienna. The Agreement governs the operation and maintenance of our contribution of three (3) facilities to the International Monitoring System (IMS), a global network of 337 monitoring stations in 90 countries, which is used to detect nuclear explosions;
- (2) subscribed last year to the Hague Code of Conduct on the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles. The Philippines shares the view

of other subscribing states that the HCOC is a step towards the integration of ballistic missiles in the arena of multilateral nonproliferation and disarmament;

(3) as a state party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), is about to begin the process of enacting implementing national legislation for the Convention.

The Philippines will also continue to work hand in hand with our ASEAN partners in pursuing consultations with the Nuclear Weapons States to ensure the effective implementation of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone.

The Philippines also supports the efforts to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, which it views as a positive development in regional arms control and disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

Weapons of mass destruction are not the only threats to international peace and security. The world is also equally threatened by the proliferation of other deadly weapons, specifically small arms and light weapons and landmines.

The proliferation and uncontrolled spread of these weapons pose a serious threat to peace, security, safety, and especially for developing countries, their sustained economic growth and development. The illicit trafficking of these weapons has also led to armed conflict in many parts of the world, adversely affecting millions of innocent civilians, most of them women and children.

In this regard, the Philippines considers as a significant step towards the right direction the Program of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects in 2001.

In this regard, the Philippines actively participated in the First Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects which was held here in New York last July.

During that meeting, we stressed the need for closer linkages among national implementation, regional initiatives and global action to ensure a meaningful implementation of the program.

One of the major steps undertaken by the Philippines in addressing the problem of proliferation of small arms and light weapons is the sustained enhancement of our stockpile management capabilities. The Philippines also has in place specific regulations that not only serve as effective tools in addressing this concern but which also substantially conform to the United Nations Program of Action on stockpiling small arms and light weapons.

The Philippines is also creating safety nets for protecting children from the adverse effects of illicit small arms and light weapons. As part of the long-term strategy to address the humanitarian costs and consequences of small arms proliferation, my country is undertaking a comprehensive program for children in armed conflict.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Philippines agrees with the call of the other delegations for comprehensive reform in the United Nations. We will actively support efforts aimed at reinvigorating both the General Assembly and the First Committee to allow them to respond more effectively and more efficiently to the challenges that confront us now and in the future.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.