



PHILIPPINES

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR BAYANI S. MERCADO
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OF THE PHILIPPINES TO THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE
NEW YORK, 3 OCTOBER 2006

Madame Chair,

The Philippines joins other delegations in congratulating you on your assumption as chair and for making history by becoming the first woman to preside over the First Committee. We also congratulate the other the members of your bureau on their well-deserved election.

The Philippines expresses its appreciation to Undersecretary General Nobuaki Tanaka for giving us a broader picture of the disarmament and international security environment in the statement he delivered yesterday.

The Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the member-countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Madame Chair,

No one would dispute the fact that the proliferation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons pose a serious threat to peace, safety and security and even to sustained economic growth and development. Developing countries are more vulnerable as the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons has fuelled armed conflict in some parts of the world, adversely affecting millions.

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Like other delegations, we had high hopes during the 2006 Conference to Review the UN Program of Action in Small Arms and Light Weapons and are thus disappointed that it was unable to reach agreement on a formal outcome document. During the review conference in June, the Philippines highlighted four points: international cooperation; the need to promote dialogue and a culture of peace in the implementation of the program of action; the important role of civil society; and follow up mechanisms.

We wish to reiterate these points as we look forward to a new resolution that would set a direction for international community action on the issue of preventing the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. This resolution should give emphasis to the follow up mechanisms to effectively implement the program of action to be addressed by the next review conference.

The Philippines would also like to underscore the important role civil society plays in our efforts to address the scourge of trafficking in small arms and light weapons through the promotion of a culture of peace. The role of civil society has been recognized in several provisions of the program of action. As such, it should have a role in international, sub-regional and national efforts to implement the program of action.

In particular, the Philippines recognize the role faith communities and interfaith cooperation can have in implementing the program of action. We have been actively encouraging these faith communities to call on their respective followers to extend their full cooperation in efforts to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

We have been actively pursuing and promoting interfaith dialogue among the different faith communities to come up with a coherent and unified stand on this issue. We believe that the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace participated in by 50 governments, 15 UN agencies and 110 religious NGOs accredited with the UN can be called upon to extend its support in this regard.

Madame Chair,

Five months ago, Secretary General Kofi Annan told his audience in Tokyo that the world is at a crossroads where it has to choose between two paths—one that leads to the restriction and reversal of nuclear proliferation and another that leads to a growing number of states that feel obliged to arm themselves with weapons of mass destruction and non-State actors acquiring the means to carry out nuclear terrorism.

In his speech, the Secretary General lamented that the international community appears to be sleepwalking towards the latter direction as a result of what he said are its miscalculations, sterile debates and the paralysis of multilateral mechanisms. Sadly, nothing much has changed since the Secretary General made the statement.

Things are as complicated as ever with the current deadlock in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Just a year ago, the Philippines expressed its disappointment over the failure of the Review Conference for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

We also joined others in expressing disappointment in the failure of the 2005 World Summit to include a section on disarmament and non-proliferation on its final outcome document. We are likewise disheartened that the credibility and capability of the Disarmament Commission to fulfill its mandate and advance the disarmament agenda has been put into question, especially after it only made minor changes to its working methods after meeting for three weeks in April.

Despite these frustrating developments, the Philippines is one with the Secretary General in saying that now is the time to break the current impasse in multilateral negotiations and bring disarmament back on the international agenda. Urgent progress is needed and all member-states must muster the political will to achieve the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Madame Chair,

The Philippines recognizes the danger of weapons of mass destruction falling into the wrong hands. The world has seen how far terrorists are willing to go in wreaking havoc just to bring their message of hate across. We cannot afford to make the mistake of allowing the wholesale murder of innocents through the use of these weapons to happen.

We share the concern of other member-states on the threat posed by the trafficking of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons to non-state actors and their use for terrorist activities. We also share the concern over the lack of measures in existing international laws to address this problem.

In view of this, the Philippines will actively engage itself in efforts to strengthen all relevant international initiatives to prevent non-state actors from acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction. While the Philippines believes that the best way to prevent this from happening is to eliminate such weapons, the problem of proliferation can be immediately addressed through creative, dynamic and proactive approaches. Domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of such

weapons and means of delivery, particularly for terroristic purposes, could be adopted, including legislative measures.

As an elected member of the Security Council from 2004 to 2005, the Philippines actively participated in the negotiations that led to the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1540 that calls on all states to refrain from supporting by any means non-state actors that attempt to acquire, use or transfer nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their delivery systems. The Philippines co-sponsored that resolution and later sat as vice chairman of the 1540 Committee.

Madame Chair,

This year, we mark the 10th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The 176 signatures and 135 ratifications by member-states that have been gathered so far is an indication of the international community's continued recognition of the important role of the treaty not only in bringing an end to a period that has witnessed over 2,000 nuclear test explosions worldwide but also for its contribution to the enhancement of world peace and security.

The Philippines is one of the 17 of the 32 countries from the Asia-Pacific that has completed the ratification process.

As current chair of ASEAN, the Philippines would like to highlight and welcome the recent ratification of the treaty by Vietnam, a fellow ASEAN member. This is of particular importance since Vietnam is one of the states listed in Annex II of the Treaty. The Philippines reiterates its calls on those states that have not signed and/or ratified the treaty, to do so as soon as possible to maintain momentum for the treaty's early entry into force, particularly the 10 remaining Annex II states.

I would like to end Madame Chair by once again assuring you of the full support and cooperation of the Philippine delegation as you steer the work of the First Committee to its successful conclusion. Thank you.