



PHILIPPINES

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Statement by

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Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations

Agenda Item 67 – Promotion and protection of human rights

61st Session of the General Assembly

30 October 2006

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of the Philippines is fully committed to the universal promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Constitution of the Philippines makes it paramount policy to value the dignity of every human person and to guarantee full respect for human rights. My government also believes that accession to and full implementation of human rights instruments are essential if we are to have universal promotion and protection of human rights.

The Human Rights Council

Mr. Chairman,

Our collective commitment to enhance the human rights work of the UN has come to fruition with the commencement of the work of the Human Rights Council. This first year of the Council's operation is a crucial period, as this is the time we lay the building blocks that will chart the Council's functioning. The Council's work, in its past sessions, has been marked by a reasonable degree of progress, but we remain confident that its mechanisms and procedures, including the periodic review mechanism, the thematic work, the working groups and special rapporteurs, will find their essential shape within the year. We thank the Member States for putting their trust on the Philippines' capacity to contribute to making the human rights machinery more effective, more cooperative and more credible. The Philippines has also taken its candidature pledges seriously, and I am happy to share with the Committee that the Philippines has made concrete gains in realizing these commitments. For example, the Philippines has just passed a law abolishing the death penalty in the country, consequently enabling us to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The government is also intensifying domestic efforts to address pressing human rights issues, with President Arroyo herself vowing to go the extra mile to investigate reports of human rights violations. This was exemplified with the recent creation of two bodies: a national-level task force called Task Force USIG, and an independent commission that will investigate, with the highest priority, reports of human rights violations, particularly those directed at political figures, media personnel and human rights defenders. These bodies would report to the President outlining action and policy recommendations, including appropriate prosecution and

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legislative proposals aimed at eradicating the root causes of these incidents and breaking the cycle of violence once and for all.

Improving the international human rights regime

Mr. Chairman,

It is a huge accomplishment for the Human Rights Council to adopt two important instruments aimed at addressing both lingering and current human rights issues. The draft International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance responds to a substantial gap in international human rights law, that is, the absence of a treaty that explicitly bans practices leading to enforced disappearances and enshrines the right of families to the truth. On the other hand, the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples responds to the decades-long aspiration of indigenous members of our societies for international recognition for their human rights. The draft Declaration, in conjunction with our national law on the rights of indigenous members, will solidify and enhance the human rights foundations of the work to improve the lives of our indigenous nationals.

While States may have different ways of understanding some provisions of these instruments, my delegation believes that what is essential is that a collective commitment has been forged to highlight and address these as priority human rights issues. The Philippines thus looks forward to the imminent adoption of the two instruments. We remain convinced that the aims and provisions of these instruments, in congruence with national principles and aspirations, will make for a better environment that effectively improves the protection of human rights.

Visits by Special Rapporteurs

Mr. Chairman,

In line with the commitment to strengthen the protection of human rights through the monitoring of human rights situations, we have been stepping up domestic consultations in relation to the possibility of visits by several Special Rapporteurs. In this regard, we are happy to announce the Philippines' readiness to invite the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions sometime in the first quarter of 2007. We appreciate the eagerness of special mechanisms which have extended invitations, and assure them that the Philippines, in cooperation with the mandate holders, will be able to work out suitable timeframes and work programs to enable effective visitations.

Human rights in the context of migration

Finally, Mr. Chairman, it is with great concern that we refer to the increasing vulnerability of migrants to human rights violations. The developments in today's world, including in the approaches to guarding national security, fighting terrorism and advancing economic status, have not fully incorporated fail-safe measures that protect the human rights of migrants. This should be a matter of utmost concern because almost all countries feel, to some extent, the impact of migration and also because any human rights violation, whether committed against a national or a non-national, should be seen as a serious issue, for not only does it go against the dignity of the human person; it also leads to destabilizing the peace and harmony in the society. We continue to be confident that the Committee will use its expertise and influence to mainstream respect for the human rights of migrants in all aspects of the UN's work.

Thank you.