



PHILIPPINES

*Informal Meeting of the General Assembly on the Revised Draft Outcome
Document of the High Level Plenary Meeting
28 July 2005*

Mr. President,

The Philippines commends you and your facilitators for the issuance of the first revision of the draft outcome document which we find generally acceptable.

In keeping with your guidelines to facilitate the process of this phase of our informal consultations, my delegation wishes to propose changes in two paragraphs in order to take into account realities we have to face squarely. I refer to paragraph 12 and paragraph 116, both related to each other.

On paragraph 12, we recommend the replacement of the word "peoples" by the word "religions" in the second to the last line. On paragraph 116, we wish to add "religions" after the words "cultures" and "civilizations."

These are two apparently minor changes but are of profound importance to the 16 countries which co-sponsored the historic *Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace* here in the UN building on 22 June 2005, and also to the 26 co-sponsors of the precedent-setting General Assembly resolution A/RES/59/23 entitled *Promotion of interreligious dialogue*, adopted by the General Assembly by consensus, last October,

The declaration adopted by the Second South Summit of Heads of State or Government of member countries of the Group of 77 and China and the declaration adopted by the Special Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement, both held in Doha last month separately called for greater inter-religious dialogue and cooperation to help promote not only international peace and security but also progress everywhere.

Our proposed amendments are not, therefore, minor changes but are of considerable import to a vast number of delegations in order to give proper recognition to the role the religious sector could play in the accomplishments of the goals of the United Nations.

This is the very reason why Interfaith Dialogue was adopted by the Member States of UNESCO as its flagship project under its Program on the Promotion of Inter-Cultural Dialogue. This is the very reason that led to the adoption of the Melbourne Declaration last April in Australia by 15 countries of Southeast Asia and the Pacific on Religion in Peace and Conflict: Responding to Fundamentalism and Militancy. This is the very reason why the Asia Europe Meeting composed of the member states of the European Union and ASEAN as well as China, Japan and Korea adopted last week the Bali Declaration on Interfaith Dialogue for Harmony. This is also the very reason why the Heads of State or Government in South-East Europe adopted last December the Tirana Summit Declaration on Inter-Religious and Inter-Ethnic Dialogue. This is the reason why the leaders of world and traditional religions meet biennially in Astana, Kazakhstan to reaffirm their mission to promote peace, human rights and justice.

These are just some of the international and regional initiatives on the promotion of interfaith dialogue and cooperation. There are many other unpublished inter-religious cooperation at the national level. The Inter-Religious Council in Cote d'Ivoire helped abate the tension between the Christians and Muslims. The religious leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea met to help galvanize lasting peace between the two countries. In my own country, the Catholic Bishops and Muslim Ulamas have institutionalized a system of dialogue that helped quell the insurgency and violence in southern Philippines.

The 110 religious NGOs accredited to the UN which co-sponsored our *Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace* have asserted that they have always supported throughout the past 60 years the UN and the accomplishment of its goals. These faith-based organizations, noted for their virtue of humility, do not yearn for recognition for their contributions. As our civil society partners in the promotion of peace and security, human rights and development, it is now high time for us to give credit where it is due and to recognize that they too have a role to play even more importantly than other civil society organizations.

Thank you, Mr. President.