

PLS CHECK
AGAINST
DELIVERY

PEACE AND JUSTICE

Explanation of Vote by
H.E. Alberto G. Romulo
Secretary of Foreign Affairs
Republic of the Philippines
Open Meeting of the Security Council on Syria and Lebanon
Monday, 31 October 2005

Mr. President,

History has taught us the tragic lesson that political assassinations can lead to strife, conflict and war.

We have also learned that justice is a powerful force for peace.

We voted in favor of the resolution just adopted, for like the rest of the world, we seek justice for former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and the 22 other victims.

We voted for this resolution for we know that with justice, there can be true and lasting peace.

The Mehlis investigation points towards a massive conspiracy. It lays a solid foundation for further criminal investigation to identify, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of this crime. The Mehlis Commission must be allowed to continue with its work.

The investigation had made much headway because of the cooperation of Lebanon.

We commend and thank the Government of Lebanon for the full assistance and cooperation it has so far extended to the Commission in the discharge of its mandate, in accordance with paragraph 3 of resolution 1595.

But the investigation could not be completed because of the lack of cooperation of Syria.

We are deeply concerned by the conclusion of the Commission that Syrian authorities have cooperated only form and not in substance. Of even more concern, the Commission also concluded that several Syrian officials have tried to give false or inaccurate information to mislead the Commission.

We urge the Government of Syria to fully comply with the mandates of this resolution and resolution 1595.

Questions have been raised on the complicity of Syria. These are questions that must be answered.

When all the answers are in and when the investigation is completed, it is the Government of Lebanon that will pursue further legal action under its criminal justice system.

The assassination of Mr. Hariri remains essentially a domestic concern of Lebanon. It can only be effectively redressed by and within Lebanon.

The international community, however, must lend all possible material assistance, as well as political and moral support, for the Lebanese Government and people.

The extension of the mandate of the Commission until December 2005 is a good and powerful message. It is a practical step towards ensuring international awareness and support for all efforts to see that justice is done.

We are grateful to the sponsors of resolution 1636 – the United States, the United Kingdom and France – for their resolution. We are grateful too for their openness in accommodating our concerns on key operative paragraphs.

We will eagerly await the Commission's periodic reports and hope that it is able to complete its work before its mandate expires on 15 December 2005.

Today the Security Council not only cast a vote for peace and justice, but also struck a blow against those who use political assassination to sow fear and terror.

The Council by this resolution has reinforced the notion that political assassination is an act of terrorism.

An act that can bring to the fore the employment of extraordinary powers under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Thank you.