



PHILIPPINES

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OUR COMMON HUMANITY – THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE BUILDING OF A BETTER WORLD

Philippine Policy Statement by
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The Last Battlefield

Mr. President, I convey my delegation's felicitations on your election to lead this historic session. I also wish to express our deep appreciation to Ambassador Jean Ping, whose leadership and wisdom proved to be the key to the successful negotiation and adoption of our outcome document.

Sixty years ago, enduring peace was foremost in the minds of the founders of our Organization. Scarred from war and stunned by mankind's capacity for death and destruction, failure was not an option.

Our common humanity demanded that we build a better and peaceful world.

To do that, representatives from fifty nations gathered in San Francisco, in a building dedicated to those who defended and fought for freedom, to draft a charter that would unite the nations of the world for peace.

General Carlos P. Romulo, the head of the Philippine Delegation, articulating the hopes of mankind said then at the United Nations: *"LET US MAKE THIS FLOOR THE LAST BATTLEFIELD"*.

The leading lights attending the founding of the United Nations are all familiar to us – Stettinius, Lord Halifax, Gromyko, Wellington Koo, Joseph Paul Boncour, His Royal Highness Faisal Ibn Abdul Aziz, Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, Jan Smuts, Jan Masaryk, Paul-Henri Spaak, Herbert Evatt, Exequiel Padilla, among others.

These visionaries led the historic and daunting task of writing the United Nations Charter.

The Coming Battle

A third of mankind was still under colonial domination. Only three Asian nations were in attendance. Most of Africa were not yet independent nations.

In a forum dominated *by* colonial powers, the Philippines fought to ensure the notion that the goal of the trusteeship council should not only be self-governance but independence.

When the United Nations emblem was being drawn, General Romulo asked that the Philippines, although still a Commonwealth, be included. He was told that the Philippines would only be a small dot on that now familiar map. He demanded nevertheless that the dot be placed on the map.

The Philippine insistence on its place on the world map, albeit just a dot, symbolized for many soon-to-be independent and developing nations, the challenge facing the United Nations.

The clear challenge facing the United Nations at its inception, and particularly the developing nations, was to ensure that freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to pursue human dignity would be at the heart of the political independence of states.

Sixty years after San Francisco, we continue to face the challenge of freeing all our peoples from want and from fear, and allowing them the true dignity that they deserve as independent nations.

The Continuing Fight for Freedom

The fight for the political and legal independence of states is over, but the fight to win for all peoples their freedom from fear, want and to pursue human dignity continues.

There are many threats to these freedoms - terrorism, poverty and underdevelopment, deadly diseases, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, environmental degradation – all these and more, affect everyone.

As a developing country, freedom from want is an utmost concern. Poverty, the energy crisis, and insufficient financial resources compounded by debt are the pressing challenges facing my country and its people.

We also face serious security threats, particularly from terrorism – with many of our citizens victimized by terrorist attacks. We recognize the economic and social underpinnings of these acts.

In the not too distant past, my country also had to confront the threat of SARs — a contagious disease that crossed borders within our region and spread to other continents as well.

Our national experience prompts us to agree with the Secretary General that these global threats are all interrelated and our different perceptions of the imminence of the threats facing us should not deter us from cooperating to address them.

This brings me to my central theme today — that we should let the bond of our broad vision of our common humanity inspire us all to work towards a stronger United Nations for a better world.

We agree with the Secretary General that no nation can defend itself against threats entirely on its own. The challenges are daunting, but we could all profit from the extra mile that the synergism from our collective efforts will accord us.

We agree that development, freedom from fear, and human rights concerns are interrelated and should be equally considered in designing the solutions to the threats we face. We believe that because of this interrelation, these concerns should be addressed in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

We also believe that the best way to achieve this is for solutions to be multilaterally considered and agreed upon and applied to all without discrimination. This can ensure maximum results.

Responsibilities too must be shared by all and therefore, the UN must continue to play a central role as the most universal and representative intergovernmental organization.

Existing multilateral regimes should be strengthened and new multilateral mechanisms or framework for cooperation to address multi-dimensional aspects of pressing problems and threats should be developed.

Enemy for Development, Debt Relief for Growth

The world is faced by the problem of unbridled spiraling of oil prices. International cooperation on energy is increasingly becoming an imperative as the capacity and capability of countries, particularly non-oil producing developing countries, to meet their development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals, are affected. This unavoidably impacts on security.

The Philippines welcomes the 100% debt cancellation for the 38 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). However, the debt situation is expected to worsen, as middle-income countries go deeper in debt with the threat of rising world oil prices. Once more, the need for other innovative and creative means of international cooperation for debt relief also becomes imperative.

The Philippines has proposed the consideration of the adoption of a debt-conversion scheme including "debt-for-equity" or debt-for-MDG project. The scheme calls for the conversion of 50% of the debt service and/or principal value of the debt into equity for MDG projects of at least equal value with an income earning potential.

Debt for development projects can focus on areas that would achieve MDG benchmarks such as hospitals and health care; schools, classrooms, information technology; clean water; electricity; reforestation; eco-tourism and others.

Human Dignity and Migrant Workers

The nexus between development and international migration cannot be overlooked. Migration brings challenges and opportunities to countries of origin, destination and transit. This is another multi-faceted issue that requires international cooperation to be addressed in a coordinated and coherent manner.

A comprehensive and effective international mechanism or cooperation should be drawn up to address its politico-security, social, cultural and economic development dimensions.

As one of the major sending states, the Philippines stands ready to cooperate with all countries in contributing towards the formulation of effective mechanisms that would help ensure a smooth management of the migration phenomenon.

Interfaith Dialogue Towards Greater Peace, Understanding and Tolerance

The Philippines knows only too well the fear that terrorism instills in the civilian population and the anguish it brings to victims and close relatives and friends. We take cognizance of terrorism's political, social and economic underpinnings.

Our national experience has shown us the value of dialogue in our approach to consider all these factors. The Philippines wants to share this positive value of dialogue and therefore has taken the lead in drawing attention to the need for interfaith dialogue as an integral part of the promotion of the culture of peace.

My President recently convened a successful informal summit on interfaith dialogue and cooperation. The Summit adopted a declaration calling for greater inter-religious, inter-cultural and inter-civilizational dialogue and cooperation to ensure a lasting and durable peace and understanding at the global, regional and national levels.

We invite all who agree with its principles to consider adhering to the declaration.

The Irony of Interdependence

We all acknowledge that the world has reached an unprecedented stage when there are virtually no more barriers whether of space or time.

Communication technology has made possible the dissemination of information instantaneously to practically all parts of the globe.

As the 19th century brought us the industrial revolution, the 20th century brought us to the technology revolution ushered in by computerization. The twenty-first century now offers infinite possibilities to further advance the information age.

At no other time has the saying no man is an island rang truer. As the Secretary General has said, what affects one affects all in this globalized world.

The information age is however a two-edged sword, as experience has shown us. While it opened opportunities, it also brought challenges that we all have to cope with.

Our concern however is that just as the limitless opportunities it offered could be used to benefit humanity, it could also be used destructively. Information technology enables companies to search for lowest cost factors of production globally, operate more efficiently and pass on the benefits to consumers.

However, this same technology also enables disillusioned and desperate members of society to become agents of terror, recruit adherents to their way of thinking and viewing the world and their modus operandi as well as to fund their destructive activities.

The globalized world therefore makes us more acutely aware of our interdependence. As the opportunities are interdependent, so too are the threats.

It is therefore in our common interest to bring together our collective strengths to take advantage of the opportunities before us as well as to confront common threats.

Reforms with Result

For sixty years, the United Nations has provided us the forum to draw up norms of conduct that takes on board all our concerns. From its inception with 50 member countries in 1945, the membership has almost quadrupled to its present 191 states.

While the United Nations has, time and again, adopted some reforms, at no other time has the pressure for far-reaching change been starker than it is now. The changing needs of its increasing membership must be met.

The evolving global and regional security environment, ongoing conflicts in many countries that have multi-dimensional root causes and other flashpoints have to be addressed.

It is clear that in pursuing our shared interest to preserve our common humanity, the United Nations continues to serve as our indispensable tool. It is therefore also our shared interest to strengthen it. The Philippines proposes that we follow the principle

that the form follows the substance in strengthening the key structures of the UN system.

Even before San Francisco, some key decisions had already been reached among the major powers, primarily on the power of the veto, or what was referred to then as the 'unanimity rule'.

Our delegation, in concert with others, pressed for an increased role for the General Assembly and for limits on the use of the veto. We felt that this was the balance necessary to safeguard the effectiveness of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security.

We also urged wider and more equitable representation in the Security Council – an aspiration which has yet to achieve realization, and thus an advocacy which my country carries to this day.

The outcome of the High Level Plenary Meeting provides the substance upon which to strengthen the UN system. They should guide us well in our discussions on institutional reform.

Practical Strategies

Six decades after San Francisco, our common humanity remains at stake. We have today another opportunity to make our United Nations succeed.

Whether the issue is United Nations reform or freedom from want or fear, we must act now to ensure that the principles committed to by our leaders at this year's Summit, be implemented effectively and efficiently.

Allow me therefore to present at this point some practical strategies that may assist us in ensuring that we achieve our goals. Our proposed strategies assume that multilateral frameworks and mechanisms will be the approach adopted to implement the High-level Plenary meeting commitments.

First, the agreed commitments should be broken down into tangible steps. Concrete benchmarks and pragmatic indicators of progress must be set. The interrelated nature of the commitments will admittedly not make this an easy task, but we need to take this forward step.

Second, with concrete international benchmarks, national strategies can be geared to achieving these. All concerned national actors in domestic procedures and actions should be involved. This is necessary to put into effect and implement multilateral commitments.

Ideally, national actors should be privy to developments in the negotiating process and have the opportunity to provide their own inputs to the national position to be taken. This is expected to ensure implementation and follow-up to the commitments made by our leaders.

In this way, necessary legislative and executive action to ratify or put the treaty into effect will be facilitated.

Familiarity with the intent behind the provisions of the international instrument will facilitate the drawing up of the necessary implementation laws and executive orders.

National agencies will be able to more readily assume responsibilities created by the provisions of the agreements, where such institutions already exist. Otherwise, new national institutions can be mandated or cooperative networks can be created among appropriate agencies.

Domestic programs to implement the commitments made by the leaders can be supported in the national and local budgets, as appropriate and as resource capacity allows. Where capacity is lacking, international cooperation can be further resorted to.

Third, we must not lose sight of the need to increase congruence among national, regional and international plans of action. Keeping these in sight contributes to a faster rate of achieving the goals. National plans of action can be elevated to the regional level, whenever feasible. Regional cooperation and pooling of regional resources can scale up progress on the goals.

Fourth, we must rethink our existing modes of international cooperation. There will be value in assessing how we have been collaborating bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally. Let us assess the effectiveness of our current modes of cooperation.

As we assess, we open ourselves to explore new collaborative arrangements that can make better use of comparative advantages, expertise, experience and resources available from countries, international agencies as well as civil society. Let us challenge ourselves to discover new opportunities to address new threats.

Old Hopes, Enduring Dreams

In adopting practical measures and in discovering new opportunities and addressing new threats, we must be mindful of the old hopes and enduring dreams that led to the birth of our United Nations.

As a child, I listened with all innocence, as my family closely followed the work of the Philippine Delegation in San Francisco. I felt proud that my nation, the Benjamin among the founders, was part of this historic event.

We were rebuilding our shattered lives and mourning our dead. Yet we held on to hope. We had hope that no country would ever again crush us with their bombs, trample us with their tanks or defile our mothers, sisters and daughters.

As a nation devastated by war, we placed great hope in the United Nations. I still remember the words that made us dare dream of a better, more peaceful world. Words

heard by a child through the crackle and static of an old radio, words spoken by General Carlos P. Romulo in addressing the delegates in San Francisco in 1945:

*"Words are more powerful than guns in the defense of human dignity.
Treaties are stronger than armed boundaries.*

The only impregnable line is that of human understanding."

Thank you, Mr. President.