



PHILIPPINES

STATEMENT

of

H.E. GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President of the Philippines

at the

**HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS AT ITS 60TH SESSION**

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PHILIPPINE MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Mr. President:

The mantra of the United Nations on its 60th anniversary is the Millennium Development Goals. But these goals are in danger of unraveling. Why? Terrorism, the energy crisis, and the debt burden of developing countries.

On the debt burden, we applaud debt relief for the Highly Indebted Poor Countries. But there are also many middle income countries that are highly indebted and have large populations that survive on less than \$1 a day.

In their case we propose a large-scale 50% conversion of debt for Millennium Development Goals financing programs. We are not asking for debt forgiveness or debt cancellation.

What we propose is that the debt service or principal amount should be converted into equities in new projects of at least equal value and with their own potential earnings.

I hope that this debt for MDG proposal will find its way into the Summit declaration and that the Paris Club, the G-8 governments, the IMF and the World Bank, the regional development banks, and the world's large commercial banks will approve this proposal.

We offer this option amidst the energy crunch.

On the energy crisis, we propose that the United Nations take the lead in collective action to ease the effects of oil prices. For instance, collective development of alternative and indigenous energy sources.

Example: converting cane sugar to ethanol or diesel oil from coconuts. Wind farms and rural solar energy projects. Collective oil rationing, energy conservation, regional stockpiling.

In addition, collective efforts to intensify oil-and-gas exploration, similar to the cooperative seismic operations that China, Vietnam and the Philippines started last August in areas of the South China Sea that they claim competitively.

We also call on the Organization of Petroleum Exporting. Countries to recycle petrodollars and extraordinary profits from the oil trade in the form of equity investments and long-term, low-interest loans to medium and poor oil-importing states. We feel justified in makin^g this call, because our overseas Filipinos contribute tremendously to the economies of the petroleum exporting countries.

Our overseas Filipinos, 8 million of them, are the reason why we sponsored the inclusion of migration in the Outcome Document of this High Level Plenary Meeting as well as the holding of a High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development. We are determined to leverage an effective global consensus to protect their rights and welfare, including their protection against global terrorism.

On terrorism, the Philippines reaffirms its commitment to wage the fight against this terrible evil. As the Secretary-General said in Madrid last Match, terrorism is a threat to all states, to all people. Like many countries, the Philippines has been struck-by-the-pain-of-terror but we

have fought back with the vigilance of ordinary citizens, a strong bilateral and regional security network, the tools of interfaith dialogue, and our strategic alliance with the United States. Our peace process is perhaps the only one in the world that incorporates an anti-terrorism component. Our ceasefire agreement with the rebels in Southern Philippines includes the interdiction of terrorist cells.

On-the-ground fight against terrorism, interfaith dialogue has gained legitimacy as a serious alternative approach to conflict. Religions are the bedrock of cultures and civilizations. Religions must be respected as we pursue development. We expect the United Nations to respect the deep Catholicism of the vast majority of the Filipino people. The funding given by the United Nations to our national government for reproductive health shall be dedicated to train married couples in a natural family planning technology which the World Health Organization has found effective compared to artificial contraceptives.

The Population Council of New York has found that artificial contraception contributes only 2% to the decline of birth rates while the combination of improving the economic condition of the family, urbanization and breastfeeding contributes 98%. Thus we ask the United Nations and donor countries to direct their assistance towards the improvement of family productivity and income.

Mr. President, the great expanse of our challenges—the deepening cut of poverty, the relentless surge of terrorism, the burgeoning debt problem, and the soaring price of oil—bid us to find courage in our

solidarity. On this 60th jubilee, we reaffirm the role of the United Nations as the primary instrument of that solidarity. Thank you.