



PHILIPPINES

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement delivered by
HON. TERESITA QUINTOS-DELES
Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process
Republic of the Philippines

During the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women
UN Headquarters, New York, 5 March 2013

Honorable Chairperson, distinguished delegates:

The Philippine delegation thanks the Commission for choosing elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls as this year's theme. We welcome the Secretary-General's report and commit our full support to ensure productive discussions that will lead to a successful outcome for this session.

Our delegation includes representatives from civil society and our national human rights institution – partners we have engaged through the years – to ensure that our efforts in addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) are truly multisectoral and participatory.

The Philippines further reaffirms the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action.

VAWG is a serious human rights violation that impacts women, families and communities and takes many forms with serious health, economic and social consequences aggravated by intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, class, disability and HIV status.

Madame Chair,

We recognize the three pillars of the global framework to prevent and eliminate VAWG:

1) legislative and policy measures that criminalize VAWG; 2) integrated services that provide prevention and treatment measures to victims; 3) information and education that improve knowledge and change behaviors and attitudes to make VAWG unacceptable.

In the first pillar, the Philippines is committed to criminalizing VAWG and its various forms, such as sexual harassment, bride-selling, child abuse, human trafficking, illegal recruitment, intimate partner abuse, child pornography and photo and video voyeurism and marital rape, through various laws and the Magna Carta of Women, our national translation of CEDAW.

While we continue to experience cases of violence against women and girls, I am pleased to say that we have reached a dramatic turning point in bringing an end to the violence of internal armed conflict which has a tremendous impact on VAWG.

In October 2012, the Philippine Government signed the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro which establishes a road map for ending four decades of war in Southern Philippines. Women's participation and leadership at the peace table has been unprecedented in number and substance, including women currently being at the helm of the national peace office and of the government peace negotiating panel, and the peace agreement that was signed explicitly ensures women's position and influence in shaping the future of the Bangsamoro.

Last December, the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act was signed into law. It recognizes, among others, that sexual and reproductive health and rights are inextricably linked to violence against women and girls.

In January, the Domestic Workers Act was signed. This brings domestic workers, the majority of whom are women in vulnerable situations, within the full and formal protection of the State.

In February, our law on anti-trafficking in persons was expanded to ensure greater protection for women and children. Just last week, President Aquino signed the Human Rights Reparations and Recognition Act which officially recognizes the atrocities committed during the Martial Law years and provides compensation to the victims of these atrocities, including victims of sexual violence.

What better way to ensure the proper implementation of these laws than to place women as vanguards of protection! With the appointment of the first woman Chief Justice less than a year ago, the Philippines today enjoys an unprecedented female triumvirate at the highest levels of the justice system with our Department of Justice and Office of the Ombudsman headed by women.

Beyond the justice system, there are women in the executive and legislative branches accompanied by men, who themselves occupy an equally important and crucial role in preventing and eliminating VAWG.

Madame Chair,

The second pillar allows government and the rest of society to provide more than just safety nets, but also evidence on the scope and magnitude of VAWG. We have nationwide women and children protection centers and units in police stations and hospitals, Women Friendly Spaces in evacuation centers and even safe houses for migrant women in our Foreign Service Posts.

The proper delivery of these services relies on the third pillar which allows us to increase public awareness through creative campaigns and other forms of public engagement. The involvement of men to eliminate VAWG became an equally important advocacy with the establishment of an active men's group called MOVE or Men Opposed to VAW Everywhere.

Finally, Madame Chair,

Despite our efforts firmly anchored on these three pillars, issues and challenges remain. We stay committed, however, in implementing this session's agreed conclusions. With an eye on next year's theme, we likewise believe that gender equality and women empowerment should continue to shape the post-2015 development agenda.

With momentum on our side, let us work together to make sure that our efforts translate to better lives for the billions of women all over the world.

Thank you and good day.

