



PHILIPPINES

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STATEMENT

Delivered by

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Permanent Representative

on

Agenda item 56

Advancement of Women

Third Committee
63rd Session of the General Assembly

13 October 2008
New York

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving the floor to the Philippines.

The Philippines associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 & China.

However, on the subject **Advancement of Women**, the Philippines wishes to underscore some important issues women face, particularly today in this world of distress and gloom because of what seems to be the gravest crisis it ever has faced globally simultaneously at less than a decade. But, before doing that I would like you to know that the Philippines has been doing all it can to protect the status and advance the causes of women through the various organs and instrumentalities of the government, the private sector and civil society, ever mindful of the adage that the hands that rock the cradle are the hands that rule the world. The Constitution of the Philippines expressly provides that the State recognizes the role of women in nation-building, and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men. (Sec. 14, Article II).

The Philippines has an arsenal of laws and executive issuances on the advancement of women or enhancing their participation in development, including a regular annual allocation of 5% of line agency budget for Gender and Development (GAD) programs and the formulation of a 25-year Philippine Plan for Gender Responsiveness Development (PPGD). Of course, the Philippines was among the first Member States to ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). That was 27 years ago. During my tenure as Chief Justice of the Philippines, the Supreme Court took a more active role in promoting such advancement through the mainstreaming of gender in the Judiciary by, *inter alia*, enacting the Gender and Development Plan for the Philippine Judicial System, and creating a Committee on Gender Responsiveness in the Judiciary, and enshrining the canon of, among others, gender equality in both its 2004 New Code of Judicial Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary (Canon 5) and 2004 Code of Conduct for Court Personnel (Canon IV sec. 4).

And now on the subject at hand.

Halfway towards the Millennium Development targets, our present efforts on the advancement of women are seriously tested by the global food crisis, the energy crisis, the accelerating outcomes of climate change, the attacks to peace brought by political and military strife, and now the consequences of the global financial insecurity. While the effects are undeniably felt across countries and regions, we have yet to assess their impact on women across the globe.

On the global food crisis alone, reports from the UN indicate that, from June 2007 to February 2008, food prices have risen 55 percent. The cost of rice, which is staple for many developing countries, has increased 87 per cent in March of this year. The food crisis also forces women to neglect their health and compromise nutrition as they make difficult choices -- if they are even lucky enough to have a choice -- as they manage their meager resources. Clearly, with an estimated 7 out of 10 of the world's hungry being women and girls, and the fact that women and children comprise a great proportion of those who live on less than one dollar a day, the food crisis presents a grave threat to the advancement of women around the world. Add to this the energy crisis which has worsened or aggravated the food crisis, and the current financial crisis, the effects of

which are already being felt by ordinary people. We can expect that women will become more vulnerable to poverty whose impact on their development and advancement would certainly be too fearful to behold.

Member States and the international community should, therefore, reassess its implementation of work towards gender equality. We cannot afford to have a “business-as-usual” attitude, if we are not to allow any backsliding on our targets for women around the world.

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretariat has reported that despite the breadth of the UN's work on gender, there are areas of our work in this Organization that persistently lack the necessary gender-sensitivity. Gender is missing not only in the reports and documentation, but also in the discussions and debates on certain issues, for example, on climate change. It should be emphasized that what is needed are not general platitudes about gender, but real and critical gender assessments and a political will to put on ground with vim, vigor, vitality and even unsurpassed courage what these platitudes seek to accomplish for women. Fortunately, the principles contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in particular the strategic objectives and actions for the critical areas of concern identified, remain timeless guidelines that we can refer to as we face the emergencies faced by the world today.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that my delegation has the honor to facilitate the discussions on a draft resolution on “Trafficking in women and girls”, a resolution that is biennially considered by the Third Committee. Although the issue of trafficking in persons has been receiving much attention and buzz lately, it should concern us that this problem is growing much faster than we can get our act together to address it. Also, Mr. Chairman, my delegation is concerned about how the approach on the trafficking problem can, at times, be removed from its greatest victims—women and girls. From the numerous strategies to combat trafficking, it can be observed that there is a tendency to approach the trafficking in persons issue only from a crime and criminal justice perspective. The fact that women and girls comprise around 80 per cent of the victims requires that a gender-based approach, which is naturally also a human rights-based approach, be a cornerstone of all anti-trafficking efforts.

Thank you.