



PHILIPPINES

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Behind a Common Cause: Advancing with Resolve, Finding Strength in Synergy

Statement of
DR. ALBERTO G. ROMULO
Secretary of Foreign Affairs
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Finding a common cause

Six decades ago, the nations of the world were drawn together in an historic undertaking.

We were reeling then from the ravages of a global war, but we were resolute in advancing together towards greater peace, progress and prosperity.

Yet our minds were held fast and firmly anchored by the knowledge that through the tyranny of individuals and the excesses of some states, it was possible to unleash in man an unsettling capacity to hurt, maim and destroy.

We vowed never to allow this to happen ever again.

We moved together as one undivided and indivisible family – behind a common cause - to uphold the sanctity of the human person, to promote human rights and to protect man and woman from forces that would violate their beings.

We articulated our collective commitment in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights whose 60th anniversary we are commemorating this year.

Triumph for humanity

Drafting the Universal Declaration on Human Rights was a difficult task. The debates at the Commission on Human Rights, the Third Committee and the General Assembly were intense.

The Philippines takes pride in its role in the formulation and adoption of the Universal Declaration as member of the very first Commission of Human Rights.

The Philippine delegation – headed by General Carlos P. Romulo – defended the draft declaration before the Third Committee thus:

"The primary purpose of the Declaration is not simply to achieve a moral success, but to enable man, all over the world to develop his rights and, in consequence, his personality. It is essential that he should feel confident that the executive, legislative and judicial powers could not impair his fundamental rights."

In the final debate before action was taken in the Plenary of the UNGA, the Philippines said:

"The United Nations had been on trial for its life and it is at this very moment that it had justified its existence before an anxious world by producing the Declaration."

In the end, despite the divergence of views, the world acted with resolve, found common ground and adopted the Declaration during the 3rd UNGA.

It was an act rightly described as a triumph for all of humanity.

Continuing and emerging challenges

60 years hence, we find ourselves in a world drastically changed yet ironically still the same in many respects.

We see clear advancements in upholding, protecting and promoting human rights.

We continue to be held by the same commitment to forswear violence and aggression and to collectively pursue greater peace, progress and prosperity. But we also continue to face traditional and new challenges to human rights.

Non-state forces such as terrorist elements – preying on ignorance and poverty – wreak havoc and destruction on unsuspecting populations, threatening the basic human right to live in peace.

They seek to polarize the world, to rend apart peoples along the lines of creed, faiths and religions, and to subject populations to live a life in constant fear.

Humanity continues to suffer.

Yet our resolve remains firm: We must continue to forge on with our common cause.

The Philippine resolve

The Philippines has made steady progress in upholding, protecting and promoting human rights.

Our democracy – the oldest in Asia – was established and anchored on the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life.

We protect the life of the unborn.

We abolished capital punishment and have joined the call for a global moratorium on executions.

We have kept our tradition of political liberties alive by strengthening democratic institutions and processes that make our Government representative, limited and accountable.

Two decades of dictatorship have left a tragic legacy of political violence to my people but we have made considerable progress in dispelling the long and dark shadows of this past.

We have learned our lessons, and we are committed to do more for human rights.

We are working with our people – within Government and with civil society – and with the international community to advance human rights.

With this united front, we can bequeath to our posterity a legacy and culture of human rights protection and promotion.

Already, we have strengthened the capacities and capabilities of our agencies to bolster their human rights protection and promotion efforts.

The Presidential Human Rights Committee – the key focal point for inter-agency coordination on human rights – is being reinforced.

The Philippines is one of the few countries to have ratified all seven core international human rights treaties.

Last year, I signed the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons. We also signed the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

We adhere to our international commitments on human rights.

We completed and submitted our periodic reports under the Convention on Migrant Workers, the Convention Against Torture and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We are prepared for the Universal Periodic Review and the national human rights action plan.

We are also prepared for the periodic review under the Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict under the Convention of the Rights of the Child as well as under the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Together, broadening human rights protection

Beyond our shores, we work with our partners in the region to broaden the frontiers of human rights protection and further reinforce the shared commitment to uphold human rights.

ASEAN signed its landmark Charter this year in Singapore.

But before ASEAN can breathe life into this historic document and give birth to a regional human rights mechanism, it has been the Philippines' stand that protection and promotion of human rights be at the heart of every member's commitment to the Charter.

The Philippines will continue to articulate this position.

An area of particular interest to ASEAN - in the regional and global context - is the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups such as women, children and migrant workers.

In the collective march to greater growth and development, we must not leave behind the defenseless and the weakest to suffer from exploitative forces.

We followed through with our commitment during the 12th ASEAN Summit in Cebu; ASEAN members have agreed to extend assistance to ASEAN nationals in distress in third countries.

To further bolster global efforts to give sustained attention to these vulnerable groups, the Philippines encourages the extension of the mandates of the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants.

We must likewise redouble our efforts to understand the impact of globalization on the human person.

As host of the 2nd Global Forum on Migration and Development in October this year, the Philippines would like to take this opportunity to invite you all.

The Forum in Manila will highlight the human face of migration and seek ways to further enhance cooperation between sending and receiving countries.

Interfaith dialogue is an initiative that is drawing greater support from the international community.

The call for greater respect and understanding for the diversity of humanity resonates with relevance, particularly for human rights protection.

As we seek to promote dialogue between peoples of different creeds, faiths and religions, we also underscore the commonalities that bind us as a single, indivisible human family.

Meaningful dialogue proceeds from an awareness and understanding of what is inherent in all of us - our human rights.

This is our bond and weapon against the extremism espoused by terrorists.

With the support of our friends, we are confident that interfaith dialogue can be a powerful tool for bringing peoples closer together in greater understanding of the value of human rights. This we have pushed in the UN. This we continue to promote in our region.

The Philippines is committed to further advance interfaith dialogue in the UN System and all relevant fora.

We urge our partners to join us in this endeavor.

Towards a stronger, more relevant HRC

The Human Rights Council is a most important forum to breath renewed life to the global efforts to protect, promote and uphold human rights.

Membership is an honor and a responsibility.

The Philippines is keenly aware of the confidence reposed on us by the larger community of nations.

We thank you for electing us to another term and renew our resolve to work with all stakeholders across all platforms to broaden human rights protection and to ensure that the HRC remains a relevant and responsive organization.

To do so, the Philippines stresses cooperative and collaborative efforts.

The Philippines will be among the pioneer countries to evaluate and be evaluated under the Universal Periodic Review.

There is much hope in the Universal Periodic Review or UPR. In its success we hope to find the solid basis for international cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights.

The review and recommendations will prove vital in improving and enhancing capacities of nations to fulfill human rights obligations.

The process is important in preparing for a national human rights action plan that sets standards for achieving human rights objectives and identifying means to carry accomplish them.

In its implementation, therefore, the UPR should be an instrument for cohesion and not a device for increasing tensions between members.

The full development of the human person is the main objective for our human rights efforts.

Necessarily, we also have to look at other factors that affect human rights protection and promotion.

In this respect, we welcome and support the initiative of the Maldives for the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to examine the implications of climate change on human rights.

A better understanding of the link is important to drive our world into action.

Some countries can afford to weather the storms, or lose kilometers of their coastline.

For island nations like the Maldives and archipelagic states like the Philippines, we do not have that luxury. What is at stake is no less than the lives of our citizens.

Moving forward

Your Excellency,

Six decades after the Universal Declaration was adopted, our world continues to face challenges to the universal protection and promotion of human rights.

We have made significant strides, yet more remains to be done.

Our Human Rights Council provides the venue for bringing us closer as one global community behind a common cause.

In our commitment to commemorate and promote the Universal Declaration, the Philippine Government pledges to donate at least US\$ 30,000 to the special fund of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

With human rights at the center of the synergy of our cooperation, we should not let our guards down and allow dark forces to abuse human rights to drive us apart.

This is our challenge.

Sixty years ago, we responded with our collective resolve in adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Today, we carry the same passion and resolve in our hearts and minds.

Today, we remain an undivided and indivisible human family, the peoples of the United Nations determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

Together, we will continue to do more for human rights.

Together we will continue to move forward. **END**