

## Philippines

General Segment of the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council

4 March 2009

Mr. President,

The Government of the Philippines reaffirms the important role of the Human Rights Council as the prime body in the United Nations system responsible for ensuring respect for human rights and human dignity. We believe that the Council must continue to pursue its mandate based on the principles of genuine international dialogue and cooperation; cognizant that an enabling international environment is conducive to the realization of all human rights in all parts of the world.

Since the inception of the Council, the Philippines has engaged constructively in all aspects of its work and has sought to contribute to the effective functioning of the Council and its mechanisms and the promotion and protection of human rights.

As one of the first countries to have undergone the Universal Periodic Review, we encourage adequate resources be devoted to this important mechanism of the Council which promotes national capacity-building for human rights. The recommendations that stemmed from the UPR are being taken into consideration in the formulation of the Philippines' national human rights action plan.

Mr. President,

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has broken new ground by agreeing to establish a regional ASEAN human rights body, the first of its kind in Asia. The Philippines strongly supported this initiative. The Government also continues to support the work of national human rights institutions in raising awareness and monitoring respect for human rights on the ground.

The Philippines has always advocated for protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, including people living in extreme poverty, migrants, women and children. In this critical time, when all countries are caught in the grips of an unprecedented global financial and

economic crisis, human rights and the situation of the most vulnerable groups cannot be overlooked. A human rights-based approach must be applied in the formulation of measures to address the negative impacts of the crisis. Massive loss of jobs have severe effects on the enjoyment of the fundamental human rights of millions, particularly in developing countries, which are most susceptible to short- and long-term losses brought about by external shocks in the global economy.

Commitment to international development, including through fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals and targets for development assistance, needs to be strengthened as a response to the human rights challenges brought about by the global financial and economic crisis.

In the context of the current economic crisis, the situation of migrants and their families is of great concern to my delegation. Migrants are in the frontlines of the global economy, taking on jobs which are vital to the well-being of all countries; yet, they are the first to be laid-off and brushed aside. Many are not entitled to the benefits of social protection, which are severely needed in this downturn. Furthermore, they run the risk of being the targets of heightened discrimination and xenophobia due to emerging economic nationalism and protectionism. Politicization of migration issues and reduction of legal avenues for migration increase the probability of human rights violations against migrants.

In this regard, the Philippines renews its call for all countries which have not yet done so, to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families as a matter of priority.

Another global issue of great importance to my delegation is climate change. The devastating effects of climate change are apparent in all parts of the world, with fluctuations in weather patterns and increases in the occurrence of natural disasters. Developing island countries face grave challenges due to rising sea levels and typhoons caused by climate change, resulting in floods, landslides, and destruction of critical infrastructure and the environment. These adversely affect the enjoyment of human rights, especially in coastal communities, which include indigenous peoples that depend heavily on the oceans for their livelihood.

Mr. President,

Trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, continues to be a challenge to all countries and severely impairs human rights. We urge all stakeholders to step up efforts and enhance international cooperation in the fight to combat human trafficking, with special attention to the needs and human rights of victims.

Lastly, Mr. President,

It is fitting that the Council's new Chamber is also dedicated to the Alliance of Civilizations. Respect for and dialogue between different cultures and civilizations is essential for peace and the promotion of human rights. States and civil society need to build more bridges of understanding, tolerance, and respect. The Human Rights Council should take the lead in this regard, and we view the Durban Review Conference on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as a key initiative to promote greater intercultural and inter-ethnic harmony.

In this light, the Philippines spearheads numerous initiatives on interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace and development. The Philippines is honored to host a Special Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace and Development later this year.

Thank you, Mr. President.