

PHILIPPINES

Statement by
H.E. Erlinda F. BASILIO

Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations in Geneva

Item 2: Update of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
12th session of the Human Rights Council
14 September 2009

Thank you, Mr. President,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate Madame Navi Pillay on the one-year anniversary of her assumption of duties as High Commissioner for Human Rights and for her comprehensive update.

Madame High Commissioner,

You have shown steadfast leadership and vision at the helm of the OHCHR, and my delegation wishes you continued success throughout your tenure. We appreciate your dedication to making the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights truly reflective of the geographic diversity of the United Nations, and support your efforts in this regard. The realization and practical enjoyment of human rights is an imperative for all regions and countries, thus we value your commitment to impartiality and independence and underscore the importance of addressing all human rights issues on a fair and objective basis.

We agree with you Madame High Commissioner that more must be done to combat all forms of discrimination. For its part, the Philippine Government has put in place strong legislative and institutional mechanisms to protect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples – even prior to the adoption of the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, a landmark bill, the Magna Carta for Women, has recently been enacted which provides women and girls equal opportunities and access to resources as well as better protection from discrimination and abuse.

At the national, regional and international levels, the Philippines continues to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue and cooperation as a catalyst for

greater understanding, peace and development among peoples of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds. Such initiatives can also be used to promote non-discrimination and respect for fundamental human rights.

Madame High Commissioner,

The global economic and financial crises, food insecurity, volatile commodity and energy prices, and the onslaught of climate change have terrible effects on the world's poorest and most vulnerable, most of whom are living in developing and least developing countries. In this context, while noting the primary obligations of states, the vital role of international cooperation in the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights has to be highlighted.

When peoples are threatened to lose their means of subsistence due to unfair trade or economic policies or climate change, the international community should render its appropriate assistance and cooperation. My delegation would encourage the Office of the High Commissioner to further develop the human rights implications of climate change and the linkages between international human rights obligations and obligations under international environmental law.

We applaud your decision to make migration and the human rights of migrants a thematic priority of the OHCHR. Millions of migrants continue to have their human dignity and rights infringed upon daily in all parts of the world. We can only endorse your statement that "states have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil a wide range of human rights of all individuals under their jurisdiction, including all migrants, regardless of the immigration status."

We therefore strongly support your advocacy of the International Convention of the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. During the last session of the Human Rights Council, my delegation delivered a joint statement on behalf of more than 20 states parties to the Convention calling for its wider ratification as a core international human rights treaty. My delegation intends to continue its advocacy for ratification of the Migrant Workers Convention in a constructive manner and looks forward to cooperating with other delegations and the OHCHR in this regard.

My delegation, as a co-main sponsor of the Council's initiatives on combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children, including the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on this topic, would encourage the OHCHR to devote more resources to its program on developing human rights-based responses to

combating trafficking in persons, not only in the context of migration, but also as trafficking is a grave and systematic violation of the human rights of individuals, and hundreds of thousands of persons are estimated of falling prey to trafficking each year.

We thank the High Commissioner for reminding us of our common responsibility and the great expectations which rest upon this Council. We must continue to conduct our work in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, seeking to foster genuine dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders. In the framework of the review of the Council's work, it would be useful to identify good practices and opportunities for strengthening dialogue and cooperation in the Human Rights Council.

We wish to thank the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council for its various initiatives to make the work of the Secretariat more user-friendly, transparent, and responsive.

We agree with Madame Pillay about the need to look at the increasing number of treaty bodies, with a view to streamlining and rationalizing their work, for the benefit of strengthening the overall system of human rights protection. Inasmuch as the increasing number of treaty bodies adds burdens on the OHCHR, it also does so for all states parties, especially for developing countries which face severe human and financial constraints, coupled with the expanded workload of the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary bodies and mechanisms. This year alone, my delegation has made four presentations to various treaty bodies.

Finally, the UPR is proving to be one of the most effective platforms of the Council for promoting human rights at the national and local level. In the Philippines, it has done much to raise awareness of human rights at all levels of government and sectors of society. As it is an evolving process, we, in due course, through the review, can study ways and means to further improve its working methods.

Thank you, Mr. President.