PHILIPPINES STATEMENT

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at the General Debate of the First Committee
of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

10 October 2014
Mr. Chairman,

My country joins other delegations in thanking you, and your country, for taking on this important and challenging task of leading the work of the First Committee for the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly to a fruitful conclusion. We assure you and your bureau of our full support and cooperation.

The Philippines aligns itself with the statements of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). As their statements comprehensively encompassed the Philippines’ long-standing positions on a wide-range of disarmament issues, allow me to underscore a few which are of utmost importance to my country.

The continued existence of thousands of nuclear weapons remains a global problem that concerns us all. When the world is experiencing major conflicts and when insecurity and mistrust abound, the danger posed by nuclear weapons in our midst cannot but alarm us.

The slow progress in not only reducing, but getting rid of these nuclear weapons, stem from skewed security perceptions and reliance on the comfort of deterrence.

We have always pushed for diplomacy and dialogue as the only way to wean States away from deterrence.

It is for this reason that the Philippines has consistently engaged in, and lent its support for endeavors that could potentially take us closer to our goal.

Nuclear weapons in our territory is something that the Philippines foreswears in our Constitution. Resorting to such weapons has never been and will never be an option for my country.

Our long-standing position on the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons stems from, first and foremost, our commitment to our own people in ensuring their safety whether at home or overseas – most particularly in areas where the nuclear threat exists. It also emanates from the commitment we made, as a responsible member of the international community, to foster global peace and security.

The Philippines commends all like-minded countries, including our partners in civil society, for tirelessly forging ahead until we have reached our goal of global zero.

It is imperative at this stage in our work, that we not only welcome, but participate in every effort that will jumpstart stalled nuclear disarmament discussions.

The recent commemoration of the 26th of September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons is one such undertaking. We encourage all Member States to get on board and celebrate this day of every year as we continue to build positive momentum towards our goal of global zero.
The Philippines also lends its strong support to the ongoing humanitarian discourse on the catastrophic effects of nuclear weapons.

From Oslo to Nayarit, and later this year to Vienna, we see these discussions as productive not only in providing hard facts about the consequences of nuclear weapon detonations to human life and to the environment; but also in terms of leading the way towards a legal framework for the total and complete elimination of these deadly weapons that have no place in a secure and stable world we all strive for.

We urge all Member States, particularly the nuclear weapon states, to take part in these Conferences.

Altogether, the legal, the humanitarian, and the moral bases for complete and total disarmament will continue to be our compass on the road towards a nuclear-weapon free world.

The Philippines continues to support calls, since 1996, for the urgent commencement of discussions on a Nuclear Weapon Convention (NWC) that will finally outlaw and ban nuclear weapons.

We call on the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to immediately start work on the NWC and urge all other States to intensify efforts towards the fulfillment of this long overdue task.

We believe the CD has had its long hiatus. It is time to get back to work. The Philippines has been unwavering in its support for the enlargement of the membership of the CD – a new membership that will finally fulfill the mandate of the CD and one that will finally get the work done.

The Philippines also calls on the remaining Annex 2 States that have yet to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to muster the necessary political will to do so at the soonest time possible.

We have joined calls for the voluntary moratorium on all nuclear tests, pending the Treaty’s entry into force. It is, however, time to move from voluntary to mandatory through the CTBT’s entry into force.

Another item in our “long overdue” list is the immediate commencement of negotiations for a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) that will prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

The Philippines exhorts all relevant States, especially those that consider the entry into force of the CTBT and the immediate start of negotiations for an FMCT as the all-important first steps towards nuclear disarmament, to provide the added impetus to these efforts.
With the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) just around the corner, and with the convening of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and All Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, as agreed in the consensus Outcome Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, remaining uncertain, it is time that the international community – governments, non-government organizations, the academe, and civil society – come together to help move this agenda forward.

The delayed Conference has undoubtedly and unavoidably impacted on this year’s disarmament meetings including in the UN Disarmament Commission and the Third Preparatory Committee Meeting for the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

While it is our collective wish that the 2015 NPT Review Conference does not suffer the same fate as previous disarmament meetings, there is deep concern that the Conference on the Middle East will once again take center stage.

The Philippines thus calls for the convening of the Conference at the earliest possible time, preferably before the 2015 Review Conference, so we can finally take the first step towards implementing the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East and eventually, achieve lasting peace in that region.

The Philippines stands ready to work with all parties and contribute to making this elusive goal a reality.

My country, along with the other nine Member States of ASEAN, are working tirelessly to also ensure lasting peace in our own region. The Philippines welcomes the recent meeting held between ASEAN and the P5 to thrash out remaining concerns of both sides as regards the Protocol to the Treaty of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ).

While we maintain our position that the nuclear weapon states sign and ratify the SEANWFZ Protocol as soon as possible and without reservations, we believe continued dialogue will provide us greater understanding of each others’ positions.

Mr. Chair,

In the area of conventional weapons, the peace that will soon come to Southern Philippines would not be possible if not for the commitment of both the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front to engage in “normalization” activities that will involve a program for decommissioning of arms and weapons.

For so long, the presence of tens of thousands of firearms, including loose ones, has posed a serious challenge to the peace process. We are hopeful that we could put these weapons beyond use in exchange for peace.

The Philippines remains supportive of the full implementation of the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in All Its Aspects to curb the proliferation of these weapons that claims millions of lives worldwide.
My country, as a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), looks forward to the Treaty’s upcoming entry into force in December this year. We are working towards our own ratification which we hope could take place before the First Conference of States Parties to the ATT in 2015.

Thank you.