



PHILIPPINES

STATEMENT

by

H.E. ALBERT F. DEL ROSARIO
Secretary of Foreign Affairs

**69th Session of the United Nations General
Assembly
High Level General Debate
29 September 2014**

**The Challenges to Peace and
Development**

General Assembly Hall
UN Headquarters, New York

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The Challenges to Peace and Development

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Philippine Government, please accept our warmest congratulations on your election as President of the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly. I assure you of the Philippines' steadfast support as you provide the leadership and inspiration to the daunting task of continuing the pursuit of a transformative and inclusive post-2015 development agenda.

In choosing the theme for your Presidency, you have positioned people at the center of this development agenda. This people-centered agenda is at the core of President Benigno S. Aquino III's *Social Contract with the Filipino People*, which is underpinned by a regime of good governance.

Consistent with both the President's *Social Contract* and the UN's Post-2015 Development Agenda, kindly permit me to present the following issues: progress on the Millennium Development Goals; climate change and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management; the so-called "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" and the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak; peace, security and the rule of law; disarmament; peacekeeping; migration; protection of women and children; and the call for United Nations Reforms.

On Progress on the MDGs

Fourteen years ago, a shared vision of a decent and secure life for all our peoples motivated us to adopt the Millennium Development Goals. We all vowed to undertake a mission to fight poverty and disease, grant children of school age access to primary education, improve gender equality, care for mothers and children, provide our communities with safe drinking water, protect our environment from further degradation, and mobilize international partnerships and resources to help those in great need.

Today, based on the latest report on the Millennium Development Goals, our collective efforts brought down the number of people living in extreme poverty by half; provided over two (2) billion people with access to safe drinking water; and achieved success in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis. But with one year to go, much remains to be done.

The Philippines' score card shows that we have made considerable progress in the areas of extreme poverty eradication, under age 5 mortality, the fight against both malaria and tuberculosis, access to safe drinking water, and gender equality. Like many other developing countries, however, we continue to face challenges in other areas.

We have recently taken pause to consider new strategies. We have also realized the importance of strengthening good-quality data collection and analysis as a tool for measuring our Millennium Development Goals and aid us in our decision-making.

A year ago, before this very same Assembly, the Philippines called for a post-2015 development agenda anchored on respect and promotion of human rights, accountable governance, and inclusive development. All our current national efforts are founded on these pillars.

On Climate Change, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

Mr. President,

The greatest challenge to the Philippines in meeting the Millennium Development Goals was the series of disasters that visited our country. Super typhoon Haiyan, the strongest typhoon to have hit landfall in recorded history, made a significant impact on the modest progress we have achieved in the Millennium Development Goals. This and the disasters in other parts of the world remind us of the urgency in addressing climate change.

Two months ago, we completed a Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Recovery Plan for the Haiyan-affected areas.

The comprehensive plan requires a considerable amount of resources and effort, but the Philippines and its international partners are determined to see this massive rebuilding and rehabilitation plan to full completion. We are resolute in not only building back but building back better.

Once again, let me reiterate the Filipino people's gratitude for the outpouring of assistance from the international community for the victims and survivors of Haiyan. Your response and solidarity were, indeed, timely, overwhelming, and inspiring.

At this time, we look forward to the forthcoming Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan and to the first-ever global Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, during which we hope to share the lessons we learned from Haiyan.

On ISIS and the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak

Mr. President,

Just as the international community mobilized as one in extending help to the Philippines in the aftermath of Haiyan, it should also do so in the case of two present day scourges – the so-called “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)” and the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak.

The Philippines condemns the war crimes and crimes against humanity being perpetrated by ISIS. We have supported Security Council Resolution 2178 on foreign terrorist fighters adopted on 24 September because we believe that resolute and immediate action is necessary to suppress this group. As a responsible member of the international community, the Philippines will do its part in the global efforts to thwart ISIS and their false ideologies.

On the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak, the Philippines recognizes its risks on global health and its impact on development. As such, we will support, based on our capacity, the international community's efforts in arresting the spread of this scourge through the auspices of the World Health Organization.

On Peace, Security and the Rule of Law

Mr. President,

Development efforts are jeopardized by setbacks brought about by threats to peace, security and the rule of law. We must ensure that conflicts do not undermine any development agenda that we pursue.

We must rededicate ourselves to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, relevant international conventions and agreements to resolve all conflicts peacefully and in accordance with the rule of law.

In this spirit, I am pleased to share the Philippine experience in building peace in Southern Philippines. With the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, we are optimistic that peace dividends in the form of investments, jobs, economic opportunities, access to basic services, and infrastructure will finally redound to the benefit of our Muslim brothers and sisters.

We are grateful to the United Nations and the international community for their role in supporting us through the long and challenging journey of this peace process.

As we herald these achievements of peace at home, however, we face the reality of exacerbating tensions in our regional seas. Again, the Philippines has resorted to the rule of law in trying to resolve these tensions.

The Philippines believes the core instrument for resolving maritime disputes is the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea or UNCLOS.

We have invited a State Party to settle our maritime disputes peacefully through UNCLOS including its provisions on dispute settlement, specifically arbitration under Annex 7 of the Convention. However, it has refused to join us and has continued to unilaterally embark on an expansionist claim that violates the legitimate rights of the Philippines and other littoral neighbors under UNCLOS such as their Exclusive Economic Zones and Continental Shelves.

Instead of peacefully resolving the maritime disputes within the framework of UNCLOS, said State embarked on a series of dangerous, reckless and forceful activities in an attempt to impose unilateral change in the maritime status quo of the South China Sea.

These unilateral activities escalated the tensions and threatened the peace and stability of the South China Sea.

In 2012, after forcibly occupying the tiny rocks of Scarborough Shoal within 126 M (nautical miles) of the Philippine island of Luzon, the aforementioned State refused to abide by a mutual agreement to de-escalate tensions by not withdrawing its vessels from the said rocks.

Earlier this year, said State imposed a unilateral moratorium on fishing in some areas of the South China Sea which infringes on the legitimate sovereign rights of the Philippines and other Coastal States to their Exclusive Economic Zones.

In the last two years, it has undertaken massive land reclamation activities in Johnson Reef, McKennan and Hughes Reef, Cuarteron Reef and Gaven Reef in the Spratlys.

These unilateral activities, among others, form part of a pattern of forcing a change in the maritime status quo in order to advance a so-called nine dash line position, an expansive claim of indisputable sovereignty over nearly the entire South China Sea, which are in contravention of both the 2002 ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and UNCLOS.

The Philippines supports the Secretary-General's call for States Parties to clearly define and publicize the limits of their respective maritime zones so that Parties will have greater certainty on their maritime spaces.

Mr. President,

UNCLOS provides a viable mechanism to resolve conflicts, one of which is through arbitration. Arbitration is an open, friendly and durable solution to the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes. Arbitration, in defining maritime entitlements, is intended to benefit all.

As such, the Philippines is more determined than ever in its pursuit of all possible means under international law to keep the conflict from escalating and undermining regional peace, security, and stability.

At the 47th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, the Philippines proposed the Triple Action Plan or TAP to reduce tensions.

Our Triple Action Plan proposal contains immediate, intermediate and final approaches to address the provocative and destabilizing activities in the South China Sea. It is a positive, comprehensive and constructive framework, which brings together various initiatives that the Philippines and other countries have been advocating on the issue of the South China Sea for the past years.

As an immediate approach, the TAP calls for the cessation of specific activities that escalate tensions in the region, pursuant to paragraph 5 of the 2002 ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea or DOC. Paragraph 5 calls for (1) the conduct of self-restraint, (2) no inhabiting of uninhabited features including massive reclamation, and (3) handling differences in a constructive manner.

For the intermediate approach to manage tensions until a final resolution is achieved, the Triple Action Plan highlights the need for the full and effective implementation of DOC and the expeditious conclusion of the Code of Conduct or COC.

As a final approach, the Triple Action Plan underscores the need for a settlement mechanism to bring the disputes to a final and enduring resolution anchored on international law.

The Philippines is pursuing such a resolution through Arbitration and believes that the Arbitration decision will clarify maritime entitlements and will pave the way for the full resolution of the maritime disputes in the South China Sea.

These approaches under the Triple Action Plan can be pursued simultaneously. It does not prejudice territorial claims.

We enjoin all to be united in addressing the challenge of resolving this issue in accordance with the rule of law.

On Disarmament

Mr. President,

The Philippines is deeply concerned over the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction from the Middle East to the Korean Peninsula.

The Philippines has remained firm in its position on the total and complete elimination of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

The Philippines strongly believes that the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and All Other Weapons of Mass Destruction should be convened as soon as possible. The Six Party talks on the Korean Peninsula should re-start. We need a successful outcome to the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to ensure the credibility of the Treaty.

The Philippines strongly supports the ongoing discourse on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons that has been gaining ground within and outside the UN.

We will continue to lend our voice to calls for nuclear disarmament until we have reached the goal of global zero.

The Philippines also deplores the use of landmines and improvised explosive devices, and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which, unfortunately still continue around the world.

On Peacekeeping

Mr. President,

United Nations peacekeeping missions are crucial for international peace and security. The Philippines, through its continuous participation in peacekeeping missions, has shown its steadfast commitment to contribute to this worthy cause.

Let me take this opportunity to thank our partners in the international community for their invaluable assistance in recent incidents involving our Filipino peacekeepers, specifically the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights. Our collective action has highlighted the importance that the international community continues to accord to UN peacekeeping.

In the face of grave danger, Filipino peacekeepers have bravely helped to safeguard world peace. They have served with honor, distinction and professionalism in implementing peacekeeping mandates.

We are deeply concerned with the continuing and emerging dangers faced by all U.N. peacekeepers and urge the United Nations and all fellow Member States to ensure that these dangers are addressed comprehensively.

We believe that outstanding operational and tactical issues relating to United Nations peacekeeping must be resolved at the highest levels as soon as possible.

The Philippines reiterates its solid commitment to uphold multilateral peacekeeping, collective security and the rule of law.

On Migration and the Protection of Women and Children

Mr. President,

When we speak of inclusive development, we must take into full account the invaluable contributions that migrant workers make to global development and progress. Their well being is a shared responsibility and the international community's commitment to promoting inclusive societies.

These migrants are especially vulnerable in times of conflict and should not be forgotten. They deserve the complete support and cooperation of the international community in ensuring their safety, security and well-being. For such an important task, all countries – whether receiving, transit or sending – must be fully involved.

We are also alarmed that migrants, particularly women and children, continue to be victims of trafficking. National and international efforts to prevent trafficking, to prosecute traffickers and to assist in the recovery and rehabilitation of victims have to be strengthened.

From a broader perspective, we should fully respect the rights of migrants by according them equal treatment in all countries.

The Philippines will continue to support efforts to protect the basic rights of migrants, to recognize their contributions to development, and to secure for them a place in the inclusive societies that we envision in the post-2015 development agenda.

On United Nation Reforms

Mr. President,

As we discuss and negotiate the best ways to deliver and implement the post-2015 development agenda, we should take concrete action on the proposed UN reforms that have been the subject of years of discussions and dialogues.

The Philippines supports change and reform in the UN to strengthen its ability to meet new demands and deliver its mandate in the most effective, transparent, accountable, and efficient manner.

Reforms should include: a better selection process for the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, and executive heads of the UN; an increase in membership of the Security Council; a review of the use of the veto power in the Security Council; an increased budget for peacekeeping missions; and ways to make full and effective use of partnership across the range of UN activities.

For example, if we were to elect a woman to be the next Secretary General of the United Nations, this would be a powerful signal on gender equality and empowerment.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

As we set the stage to roll out a new set of goals for the post-2015 development agenda, let us not lose track of the equal importance of an enabling political and social environment to support these goals.

When conflicts and insecurity endure, when disasters strike, when pandemics break out, when terrorism spreads, when Earth's bounties are confronted with depletion, we face the real danger that our development agenda will fail.

It is our responsibility, as Member States of the United Nations, to exert every effort and to expend every resource at our command, to make the United Nations the instrument for promoting peace, progress and development.

I thank you Mr. President.