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Philippines receives UN Counter-Terrorism High Level Visit to Strengthen Cooperation



The Government of the Philippines welcomed United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov and United Nations Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (UNCTED) Assistant Secretary-General Michele Coninx for a Joint High-Level Visit to the Philippines on 1-3 March 2020.

The High-Level Visit is part of the joint efforts of UNOCT and UNCTED to better understand and respond to Members States' priorities and facilitate the delivery of counter-terrorism-related assistance. It is a culmination of a series of engagements between the Philippine government and the UN that includes the Philippines' participation in the UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme (CTTP) and the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE) in Asia Project. The CTTP is a flagship programme of UNOCT that assists Member States in building their detection capabilities to counter terrorist offenses and other serious crimes by using advance passenger information (API), passenger name record (PNR), and other passenger data. STRIVE on the other hand is a joint UN-EU partnership focused on preventing and countering violent extremism in Central, South and South East Asia through a multi-stakeholder approach, including governments, security actors, civil society and private sector entities.

The Executive Secretary, represented by Senior Deputy Executive Secretary Michael P. Ong, headed the Philippine delegation during the Plenary Session on 2 March 2020. He was joined by National Security Adviser Hermogenes C. Esperon, Jr., Secretary of the Interior and Local Government Eduardo M. Año, and the Presidential Adviser of Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity Secretary Carlito G. Galvez, Jr., together with other high officials of the government.

During the Plenary Session, Under-Secretary-General Voronkov highlighted the close coordination between the Philippines and the United Nations, particularly the increased level of engagement on counter-terrorism initiatives since the establishment of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism. Under-Secretary-General Voronkov also emphasized the need to implement all four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a balanced and comprehensive manner, and to strengthen international and regional counter-terrorism cooperation. The four pillars are addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; measures to prevent and combat terrorism; measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system; and measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.

ASG Coninsx underscored the importance of strengthening further cooperation on counterterrorism between the Philippines and UNCTED, and emphasized the importance of gender, age sensitive, and human rights compliance in counterterrorism efforts.

Senior Deputy Executive Secretary Ong welcomed the strengthened cooperation between the Philippines and the United Nations and reaffirmed the Philippines' support for the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, stressing that it continues to play a crucial role in realizing the common aspiration of a world free from fear. The Philippine Government also stressed that it is taking the threat of terrorism seriously, noting that terrorist acts disrupt peace and security, and cause devastation to human lives and property.

During the visit, USG Voronkov and ASG Coninsx also met with Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro L. Locsin Jr. to discuss a wide range of cooperation between the Philippines and the UN in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. Secretary Locsin expressed gratitude for the assistance extended by UNOCT and UNCTED in building the capacity of PH agencies to combat terrorism.

UNOCT is the United Nations' lead agency on counter-terrorism while CTED assists the work of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee and coordinates the process of monitoring the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) on enhancing countries' legal and institutional ability to counter terrorism.