



**STATEMENT**

**MS. MARIA ANGELA PONCE  
Minister and Legal Adviser**

**Item 109: Measures to eliminate international terrorism  
Sixth Committee  
74<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

08 October 2019, Trusteeship Council Chamber  
UN Headquarters New York

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Philippines expresses its full support for you and your Bureau. We also thank the Secretary General for his report.

We align with the statements of Iran in behalf of NAM and of Cambodia on behalf of ASEAN.

The Philippines condemns terrorism anywhere in the world however inspired. We abhor terrorism in all its manifestations wherever, by whomever, and against whomsoever committed—and whatever the excuse.

The Philippines addresses terrorism and violent extremism through a “whole of nation” approach. While we recognize the long-term need to search for the roots of terrorism, it is our view that once terrorism has taken root, grown and started to bear militant fruit—then addressing the roots of terrorism must take a back seat, and pulling out the growth must take first priority before it scatters its seeds farther afield to take root, grow and flourish in more places. This must be done with the strictest regard for human rights; with no hurt to the innocent. For the blood of the innocent fertilizes the ground for terrorism to take root and spread.

Counter-terrorism efforts must remain anchored on respect for human rights and the rule of law. And always with this: that a state’s first, and foremost, and overriding responsibility is to protect the law-abiding against the lawless; and the innocent against those who threaten their safety and wellbeing. To that responsibility my President has made an iron, unwavering and total commitment.

But and this is a big but, when dealing with terrorism one must never err on the side of giving it the benefit of the doubt. If it talks like it; walks like it; and is armed like it; and invokes some grievance as its murderous motivation—you must take it out.

Like Sri Lanka, the Philippines has suffered terrorist attacks to our religious places of worship. In January, a bomb blast in a Catholic cathedral killed 27 and wounded hundreds. ISIS claimed responsibility. Two days later came the bombing of a mosque. These episodes, together with the taking of Marawi, bespeak the transnational character of terrorism; confirming that this scourge is the most pressing threat to world peace and security. Terrorism is a global problem no country can tackle alone.

You all know the story of the Marawi Siege of 2017. It was the most destructive act of terrorism in our history. If Marawi fell, other cities would be attacked by a terrorist group which includes foreign terrorist fighters espousing violent extremist beliefs foreign to our country, our democracy, and the rest of the civilized world. With the support of allies, our armed forces and police liberated Marawi after 5 months of non-stop fighting to prevent another Marawi siege, stop the entry of foreign terrorist fighters and the spread of local Daesh-inspired groups.

But we knew that in order to be truly successful in stamping out terrorist elements, military and law enforcement operations are not sufficient. They need to be complemented by a soft approach that addresses the underlying conditions that drive individuals to join violent extremist groups.

Hence our National Action Plan on the Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism. The Plan is new – it was finalized in May 2019 – and adopted in response to the 2016 United Nations’ Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. It was crafted with the assistance of the Government of Japan and of UNOCT, UNODC, UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women. In keeping with our “whole of nation” approach, extensive consultations were conducted over two (2) years with stakeholders, including government agencies at all levels, civil society organizations, the religious sector and the academe.

We have also made strides in countering the financing of terrorism. We adopted our National Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Strategy (NACS) in November 2018, with our Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) as the lead agency. The adoption of the NACS is also part of the country’s compliance with the Financial Action Task Force’s (FATF) 40 Recommendations. We thank Canada and the UNODC for their assistance in the development of the Strategy.

In this regard, the Philippines in partnership with Australia, will host the 5th Regional Counter-Terrorist Financing Summit in Manila on 12-14 November 2019.

President Duterte has also created the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict. This institutionalizes a whole-of-nation approach to finally end the atrocities committed by the communist terrorists against the people, and seeks

to curb the fund-raising campaign of these groups, whose success rests mainly on how much funds they have.

To put a stop to terrorism requires the widest and most sincere cooperation because one state's terrorist is a foreign interventionist's way to weaken and subjugate it. The global fight against terrorism—but only by states that scorn the use of terrorism to advance foreign policy—must cover the whole range of the counter-terrorism spectrum: from border control to countering the false narratives of extremism by piercing and countering propaganda with truth on the Internet—and always and ever by fighting it.

At the global level, we value the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism as a credible partner in the fight against terrorism. The UN Global Strategy on Counter-Terrorism has primacy. For the Strategy to be effective, the United Nations and its institutional architecture must be, not just comprehensive but coherent, coordinated, **but** not waste its time talking and wringing its hands about the roots of terrorism.

The UNOCT must work closely with CTED<sup>1</sup> and the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact but always **with** respect for national ownership and national priorities—or be thrown out by sovereign states for its presumption. No one can know better than a state how its country's particular terrorist threat must be addressed. This is one area where there are no experts outside of those fighting it in-country.

Beyond the Strategy is the urgent need for a Comprehensive Convention for Combating International Terrorism. This has been discussed to exhaustion by the UN for over 20 years now. Fortunately, we states have been combating terrorism while our diplomats exhaust patience discussing it. Let us resolve the outstanding issues now; particularly on having a common definition of "terrorism."

Finally, we express our support to UNOCT's plans for the 2nd Counter-Terrorism Week in June 2020, to be held in conjunction with the 7th Review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Thank you.

---

<sup>1</sup> Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate