

Speaking time: five (5) minutes. Check against delivery.



STATEMENT

Item 114: Measures to eliminate international terrorism Sixth Committee 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

06/07 October 2020, Conference Rooms 1-3
UN Headquarters New York

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Philippines expresses its full support for you and your Bureau. We align with the statements of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of Cambodia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

We thank the Secretary General for his report, which includes the Philippines' submission on measures taken for the prevention and suppression of terrorism.

Though the pandemic rightfully preoccupies us, it is not the only challenge we face. Terrorism remains alive, lurking in the shadows. Terrorist groups – notably the Abu Sayyaf – continue to conduct many attacks. Online recruitment has increased. Our resources are stretched because of COVID-19, but we remain vigilant.

The Marawi siege, where foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) took part, taught us that an effective legal framework is crucial. With the 2020 Anti-Terrorism Act, we now have that. It shores up the legal framework by finally allowing us to prosecute FTFs and acts of terrorism. In its implementation, it mandates the State to uphold the basic rights and fundamental liberties of the people as enshrined in the Constitution. Its enactment was done pursuant to our commitment, and strict adherence to the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 1373 and 2178, and to the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS).

To be truly successful in stamping out terrorist elements, prosecution, military and law enforcement operations are not sufficient. The underlying conditions that drive individuals to join violent extremist groups must also be addressed. Hence the adoption last year of our National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. The Department of Interior and Local Government is lead and is focused on building the knowledge base and capacity of implementing agencies, and on harnessing the knowhow and expertise of civil society.

The Anti-Terrorism Act also strengthens our efforts on terrorist financing, in compliance with directives of the Financial Action Task Force, which set an October 2020 deadline for us to reform our anti-terrorism laws or face possible greylisting.

We value the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism as a credible partner in the fight against terrorism. As such we are also proceeding with our participation in the UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme.

While the GCTS has primacy, we must continue to work towards a Comprehensive Convention for Combating International Terrorism. This has been discussed to exhaustion by the UN for over 20 years now and we hope that we can achieve progress on it.

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.

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 and the rule of law; with no hurt to the innocent. For the blood of the innocent fertilizes the ground for terrorism to take root and spread.

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 our President continues to make an iron, unwavering and total commitment.

As he declared at the General Assembly Debate, “the Philippines will do everything and partner with anyone who would sincerely desire to protect the innocent from terrorism in all its manifestations.... Most importantly, we remain committed to rebuild stricken communities and address the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism in my country.”

Thank you.