



STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

delivered by
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Item 86: Rule of Law at the National and International Levels: “Measures to prevent and combat corruption”

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Thank you, Chairperson.

We align with the statements delivered by Cambodia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We affirm our commitment to the rule of law. The rule of law is even more critical amidst the pandemic, which has unraveled many firewalls and prevention and enforcement mechanisms, both at the national and international levels, putting vulnerable groups at risk.

The peaceful settlement of disputes is integral to the rule of law. As President Rodrigo R. Duterte declared, among others, at the General Debate, “we must remain mindful of our obligations and commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and as amplified by the 1982 Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes.”

The Joint Communique of the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting likewise “further reaffirmed the need to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognized principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.”

We thank the Secretary-General for his report and appreciate his characterization of the rule of law as foundational to improving access to public services, curbing corruption, and restraining abuse of power. We note his observation on the impact of the pandemic on the rule of law.

In the Philippines, over four thousand persons deprived of liberty were released from jails through paralegal assistance provided by our Bureau of Jail Management and Penology in the first two months of the pandemic. As President Rodrigo R. Duterte reported, officials

in charge of pardons and parole were directed to meet virtually and expedite the processing of applications for executive clemency.

Meanwhile, the courts and the justice department resorted to ‘new normal’ trials, video-conferencing, online hearings, and e-inquests to uphold the rule of law and to mitigate the challenges posed by the pandemic on access to justice. The Secretary General’s conclusion that ‘technology bears the promise to transform the legal profession and to narrow the justice gap’ resonates with us and may have been hastened by the pandemic.

We agree with the Secretary General’s succinct reflection that “corruption runs counter to the very concept of the rule of law, undermines the legitimacy of the State, undercuts development efforts and is a destabilizing force.”

Preventing and combating corruption is a key priority of our government. The proscription against corruption is enshrined in our Constitution itself, which declares that public office is a public trust.

Corruption is a scourge that strikes at the life and soul of nations. It hinders, or worse, derails progress; increases its cost; keeps people poor; distorts values; and scoffs at morality. Corruption unravels societies by destroying the trust that holds them together.

Thus the force of law and the power of government should be harnessed to fight it. Instead law and power enable and perpetuate other crimes, with equal or greater severity because of the force of authority behind it.

Under President Rodrigo Duterte, we have a zero-tolerance policy on corruption and the President continually calls on the public to report erring government officials. We have a Citizen’s Complaint Hotline that enables swift imposition of administrative sanctions should government officials be found, after due process, of committing corrupt acts. In the context of criminalization, we have our Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and Anti-Money Laundering Law, among others.

We also have the Integrity Management Program, a national corruption-prevention program that aims to identify and reduce corruption vulnerabilities in government agencies and operations; ensure integrity in the public sector; and improve the public’s trust and confidence in the government.

In the fight against corruption we recognize that a coordinated multi-sectoral approach and the participation of civil society is indispensable. The Philippine Government Procurement and Reform Act requires the presence of civil society organizations as observers in local and national government bidding procedures for procurement. Bottom-up budgeting also enables CSOs to be involved in the national budget process through local government units to address community concerns.

The Philippines has been a State Party to the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) since 2006. To ensure compliance with our obligations, we have had since 2014 an UNCAC Inter-Agency Committee under the Office of the President that oversees the

review and implementation of the UNCAC, with participation by representatives from the public and private sectors.

In this regard, we fully support the special session of the General Assembly against corruption, to be held in 2021.

Thank you.