Philippine Statement

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Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Philippines

Human Rights Council special session on the human rights situation in Myanmar
2 October 2007

Thank you, Mr. President,

The reform process which led to the creation of the Human Rights Council stemmed from need to elevate human rights up to the same par as the pillars of peace and security and equitable economic development on which the United Nations was founded. We agreed with the establishment of our new Council to base the promotion and protection of human rights on constructive international dialogue and cooperation in order to address all human rights in a universal and fair manner.

It is in this spirit that the Philippines views this special session of the Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in Myanmar. We believe that the primary goal of this Council is to help and encourage all countries build an enabling environment, both on the ground and internationally, to better promote and protect the human rights of their peoples, in constructive cooperation with the international community and civil society. We are of the opinion that a consensual and cooperative approach when dealing with country situations can lead to more practical and results-oriented outcomes.

Not too long ago, the Philippines had its own experience of a peaceful transition to democratic government, which lends more urgency to our reiteration of the call made by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the United Nations General
Assembly a few days ago, that this is the time for the Government of Myanmar to take steps towards positive change, to nurture the gains so far made and to keep to the path of democracy.

The eyes of the world have looked at recent events in Myanmar, aided by the reach of information and communications technology, and the Philippines has been particularly concerned to see the sad picture that has emerged, for it also redounds negatively upon the region and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which has made great strides in forging a community of caring and sharing nations.

As a partner in ASEAN, we call on Myanmar to act in its own best interests, avoid further isolation by fully engaging with the constructive help of the international community, and redeem its democracy without further delay, as we believe national reconciliation in Myanmar shall bring stability to Myanmar and the region.

We wish to see a peaceful transition and a lasting political solution in Myanmar, through inclusive dialogue involving all parties concerned, facilitated by the release of all political detainees who can contribute to the process of national healing and renewal, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Joining our voice to the statement of the Chair of ASEAN in New York on 27 September 2007, we call on Myanmar to ensure that fundamental rights and freedoms are respected, that authorities exercise utmost restraint and avoid the use of excessive force and violence in dealing with demonstrators, and prevent additional fatalities. The Government should be able to give reliable information on those killed, injured and detained during protests. We call for positive action by the Myanmar Government to dispel the cloud of uncertainty and strife that has arisen out of recent events.
Mr. President,

We support ongoing efforts towards national reconciliation in Myanmar, such as the Roadmap to Democracy, and have patiently and persistently advised Myanmar within the ASEAN context for it to make greater and faster, meaningful progress towards that goal.

In addition to the internal political will and resources that Myanmar must harness to resolve its problems, we believe that there is value in constructively engaging with the international community in these efforts. Doing so would send a clearer message on the premium placed on democracy and peace, and in nurturing a tolerant and inclusive society, as is the tradition in Southeast Asia.

We therefore welcome certain positive developments, such as the visit of United Nations Special Envoy Mr. Ibrahim Gambari to Myanmar where he met with Senior General Than Shwe and other government officials and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We hope that Mr. Gambari’s visit shall bear positive fruit, diffuse tensions, and be a catalyst for national reconciliation. We are pleased to hear that the Government of Myanmar is cooperating fully with Mr. Gambari.

We have been informed that Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has consulted with other ASEAN Leaders, and has sent a letter to Senior General Than Shwe, expressing ASEAN’s strong concern. We also welcome reports that incidents of violence have decreased.

We wish to emphasize that the solution to Myanmar’s current crisis ultimately rests with the people of Myanmar. And we call on them not to miss this opportunity to set things right and get back on track.

From the Philippine experience, democratic reform can only be achieved and safeguarded by giving those with different views their own voices. The political
opposition in Myanmar, including the National League for Democracy, has a role to play in Myanmar’s political life. The people have to be able to be free to choose their representatives and participate in governance within the constitutional framework of national unity and development.

Mr. President,

We note the considerable challenges facing the Myanmar Government, especially in the socio-economic sphere, with rising oil prices and the many ethnicities that comprise its nation. We understand the sensitive nature of the situation, and encourage peaceful dialogue between all relevant parties in Myanmar, including the armed forces, to reach a lasting, political solution. We support constructive cooperation between the Government of Myanmar and the international community, including the Human Rights Council. Such dialogue and cooperation should contribute to a peaceful solution to the current crisis and not aggravate tensions.

The Philippines shall continue its advocacy of working for peace and democracy in Myanmar. We take this opportunity to express once again that we believe now is the time for change. This is the opportune time for the Government of Myanmar to take concrete steps towards national reconciliation and democratization, to engage peacefully with concerned parties and begin a new phase of renewal and healing and progress, for the benefit of its peoples and the region at large.

We stand ready to assist and support the Government and people of Myanmar in their efforts at this critical moment. We hope that the Council will also take into account the many daunting challenges facing Myanmar, and lend Myanmar its helping hand in bringing human rights to its peoples and society for a better and brighter future.

Thank you, Mr. President.