



PHILIPPINES

STATEMENT

GENERAL DEBATE UNGA 79

H.E. ENRIQUE A. MANALO

Secretary for Foreign Affairs

28 September 2024, General Assembly Hall

Mr. President,

In 1946, Carlos P. Romulo, who would become the first Asian President of the General Assembly said: “We are not here to make peace, but to build for peace, not to reap and divide the harvest of victory, but to make ready the hearts and minds of men and women for the needs of peace.”

In those early years of the United Nations, the Philippines had clearly understood the magnitude of the work ahead. As a founding member and a young nation, the Philippines committed fully to the aims and purposes of the UN.

Eight decades hence – we still do.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. affirmed that multilateralism “remains the single viable platform for collective action against transcendent global challenges.” He emphasized that the rule of law and the integrity of the multilateral system must prevail amidst the current global challenges.

The UN has held itself as the platform and pathway to address international peace and security. It serves as the ground for states to find convergence amidst crises and conflict. It offers response and relief, hope and humanity.

The Pact for the Future is a testament that global problems require global

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solutions, and that a better world is possible when States commit working together towards a common vision.

The Pact bridges our collective hopes and our contemporary aspirations, with the UN Charter and the sovereign equality of states anchoring our will.

Mr. President,

Our world has been changing more rapidly than at any time in recent history.

The UN must rise to the occasion with an agenda that fosters equity, justice, international peace and security, development, and adopts processes that are inclusive, transparent, responsive and effective.

One way to achieve this is to reform the Security Council and revitalize the General Assembly.

Security Council reform should be a package consisting of the enlargement of its membership and improvement of its working methods, in order to create greater transparency and accountability of the Council to the general membership of the UN.

Transforming the international financial architecture is also imperative if we are to realize just and inclusive growth worldwide. We must therefore deliver on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

We must lose no time to implement the Global Digital Compact.

Governance of new spheres of human activity, including artificial intelligence, the internet, and outer space, must keep up with the speed and scale at which these technologies are developing. New rules should place human dignity as the priority.

At the same time, we must complete the unfinished business of eliminating

weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear arms. A treaty on fissile material production is long overdue.

Mr. President,

The UN development system has accomplished much, but it requires greater coherence and efficiency with full respect for States' priorities and ownership.

The global humanitarian system has been a silent sentinel of hope and humanity to peoples in war, famine, disease, calamities and displacement. It requires greater support from the international community if it is to effectively address the suffering of people in Gaza, Ukraine, Yemen, Sudan, Myanmar, and Congo.

The rising numbers of those forcibly displaced – in Ukraine, Gaza and other places, beg for a deeper sense of collective responsibility.

Within our means, the Philippines supports agile response systems to humanitarian emergencies through the Central Emergency Response Fund, the UN Relief and Works Agency and the World Health Organization Contingency Fund for Emergencies.

The Philippines has steadfastly contributed to UN Peacekeeping Operations for over six decades. Since 1963, we have deployed over 14,000 troops in 21 UN peacekeeping and special political missions.

We should bolster the Peacebuilding Fund and support UN Security Council resolutions to safeguard education and protect cultural heritage from terrorism and armed conflict.

We echo the call of the 2024 Africa Counter-Terrorism Summit in Abuja for country-led and country-owned solutions for a peaceful and secure African continent. We are honored to be part of this.

Mr. President,

Climate change has affected communities across the world in the most profound, often tragic, ways.

The Philippines' acute climate vulnerability makes us one of staunchest proponents for strengthening climate and disaster risk resilience.

We are honored to host the Board of the Fund responding to Loss and Damage. This Fund will provide critical assistance to nations most vulnerable to climate change impacts.

Next month, the Philippines will host the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to spotlight best practices and solutions for the world's most disaster-prone region.

We consistently call on developed nations to fulfill their commitments under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

We are convinced that legal clarity on the duties and responsibilities of States under international law with respect to environmental protection and climate change, will foster solidarity on global climate action.

In this regard, the Philippines welcomes the Advisory Opinion of the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea on the collective duty of states to protect and preserve the marine environment.

Since last year, the Philippines has shepherded UN discussions on a draft instrument for the protection of persons in the event of disasters.

The twentieth anniversary of the Indian Ocean Tsunami this year reminds us again that the rising scale and frequency of disasters demand such an instrument.

Mr. President,

No one must be left behind.

We must fulfill the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Philippines governance agenda aims to achieve a single-digit poverty rate by 2028. Between 2021 and 2023, we reduced poverty incidence by nearly 3 percent equal to 2.45 million people, through innovative social protection programs.

The World Food Program has cited the Philippines for being a thought leader in this regard.

As we move towards upper-middle income status, we recognize that the UN and international financial institutions can redesign frameworks to support middle income countries, which represent 75 percent of the world's population. The Philippines will host a conference early next year to advance these discussions.

Now sixty years old, the Group of 77 continues to advocate for a fairer, more inclusive, global economic order. We thus hope that the Second World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development will catalyze strategic action for narrowing global inequalities.

We welcome amendments to International Health Regulations and progress on a Pandemic Agreement. The Philippines leads the Group of Equity to promote developing country priorities in the negotiations of this Agreement.

We also lead discussions in the World Health Organization on a sustainable global health workforce, as the world braces for a shortfall of 10 million medical professionals by 2030. We will host a Philippine-Pacific forum on human health resources later this year to discuss regional solutions.

Migrants across the world are in need of more protection. Together with health workers, seafarers were the unsung heroes during COVID-19 and the post-pandemic recovery. The Human Rights Council adopted in July the Philippine-led resolution recognizing the human rights of seafarers.

International and inter-generational solidarity make our societies more humane and empowering. We welcome the Declaration on Future Generations and we support a binding convention on the rights of older persons.

Effectively building peace means fostering inclusive societies which harness the full capacities of persons and communities. Our work in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao offers Filipino best practices for people-focused peacebuilding.

This inspires the Philippines' leadership in amplifying the role of women and youth in peace processes. Next month, the Philippines will convene the International Conference on Women, Peace and Security ahead of the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2025.

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Our recent chairship of the Commission on the Status of Women convinces us that despite progress made, much remains to be done to achieve true gender equality.

Mr. President,

Multilateralism is underwritten by a rules-based order governed by international law and informed by the principles of equity and justice, that safeguards the rights of all states.

If multilateralism is to thrive, all states must adhere to the rule of law.

Times of flux and crises offer opportunities for reinforcing a rules-based international order.

The International Court of Justice, as a principal organ of the UN, together with other international judicial and legal bodies, advances the rule of law. They uphold the primacy of resolving international disputes by peaceful means, not by the threat or use of force.

The growing volume and variety of cases brought before the ICJ and the Permanent Court of Arbitration signify the global trust and confidence in their role in peaceful dispute resolution.

Member States must invest fully in these institutions.

The use of force and threat of use of force to resolve disputes has no place in our world.

The 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the binding 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea constitute the foundation of our policy on the South China Sea. The Award declares that claims exceeding entitlements beyond the limits of UNCLOS have no legal basis.

Despite irresponsible and dangerous actions against our legitimate activities within our own waters and Exclusive Economic Zone, the Philippines remains committed to diplomacy and other peaceful means to settle disputes.

We will abide by the UN Charter and the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Resolution of Disputes in asserting our sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the South China Sea.

We do not accept narratives depicting the South China Sea as a theater of major power rivalry because they all ignore what is an essential truth: all states in this region have a right to determine their own destiny and secure their own future.

This is what the UN Charter is about.

The future of the Asia Pacific is being shaped not by one or two powers, but by all states therein.

As such, ASEAN centrality stands as a vanguard of the regional architecture based on the sovereign equality of states jointly building a peaceful, rules-based and people-centered community.

Approaching 60 years, ASEAN exemplifies the agency of states working together in fashioning multilateral approaches and solutions to present-day challenges.

Mr. President,

The Philippines stands alongside the pathfinders and bridge-builders of nations. We offer constructive solutions across the spectrum of the work of the UN – from human rights, health and humanitarian action to development, disarmament and disaster and climate risk reduction, from peacemaking to peacekeeping to peacebuilding.

As the first Asian Republic and a founding member of the UN, our diplomacy has consistently pursued peace, the sovereign equality of states, the rights and dignity of all persons.

The Philippines is a trusted partner, innovative pathfinder and committed peacemaker. We bring experience, depth and steadfastness in working with the international community to address common global challenges.

We thus count on your support for our bid for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for the term 2027-2028.

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Mr. President,

Almost 80 years since General Romulo's call, the mission of the United Nations remains [PAUSE] : to keep building for peace.

Thank you.