

80TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

GENERAL DEBATE

NATIONAL STATEMENT

to be delivered by

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Speaking time: 15 minutes

Mr./Madam President (*depending on who is presiding*),

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the closing of the San Francisco Conference in 1945, Filipino General Carlos P. Romulo, declared the UN Charter as an achievement for all humanity. It is an accomplishment, he said, that “will embrace and protect, as at the same time that it liberates, the human spirit.”

Our faith in the UN Charter endures, as the international community celebrates the 80th anniversary of the United Nations.

United in purpose, we the 193 member states of the United Nations are stewards of this edifice. It counts on our courage to be equal to the task it bestows on us.

A COVENANT OF PEACE

The United Nations was born in the rubble of war.

We embarked on a peace that works not only for the powers of that day but also for all of humanity, for all time.

We forged, through the Charter, a covenant of just and equitable peace.

Yet today, we ponder on the triumphs of this shared journey amidst the jolting clamor for peace and humanity under the very circumstances for which the United Nations was conceived.

We must end the suffering of millions who live in starvation and fear in Gaza.

Ceasefires must hold. Humanitarian access must be restored without restrictions. Children, women, and innocent civilians must be saved from further violence. Healing must begin. The Two-State solution is the only viable diplomatic solution for sustainable peace.

We must end the conflict in Ukraine. A just peace is only possible with respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity.

We must double down to address humanitarian crises around the world, looking at their roots and investing in durable solutions. We must protect and assist displaced populations in Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sahel region, of the Rohingyas and in many other parts of the world

This June, the Secretary General reported over 40,000 cases of violations against children in armed conflict, the highest recorded in 30 years. This is unconscionable. We owe our children peace.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

As UN founders recognized that peace was the antidote to fragility and uncertainty after the war, these times call on the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, to make bold decisions. We must forge new pathways for international peace and security.

This is a challenge that the Philippines is ready to rise up to, as we seek a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the term 2027 to 2028. We look ahead to the solemn honor of serving this body.

The Philippines is committed to contribute to the Security Council in a manner that takes into account the views and concerns of the general UN membership and other principal organs of the United Nations.

We recognize the weight of the responsibility of the Security Council. When it acts for the interest of humanity, it is a fulcrum of change, a force for good, and

a bastion of hope for populations trapped in hopeless situations.

We seek to be part of it to help advance the cause of global peace, with the depth of experience earned from our struggles for peace.

In the Philippines, we know that beyond stopping hostilities, peace is a just order, with individuals flourishing in dignity at its center.

The success story of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao or BARMM tells us that peacebuilding, though sometimes arduous and long, endows communities their rightful future.

Our vision for global peace finds its home in the 1982 Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes.

“IN LARGER FREEDOM:” NEW DEMANDS OF DEVELOPMENT

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

The UN Charter binds nations in promoting peace and progress “in larger freedom.”

This drives our quest for global solutions to the transcendent challenges that affect nations. New models are needed to achieve equitable, sustainable, and inclusive development.

For decades, the UN development system has aided transformation in many nations, including the Philippines.

Amidst current funding shortfalls, we must support reforms to help it deliver value to UN Member States, in tight accord with national priorities, with less bureaucracy and fragmentation.

It is regrettable that politics and the demands of war have cut development financing globally, just as we embark on the last-mile of the SDG agenda.

This has shifted the focus to the roles of developing and middle-income countries as shapers of development solutions.

And why not? Together, we are the fastest growing economies, the largest consumer markets, and the top sources of human capital.

Even as we manage our share of economic vulnerabilities within our borders, developing nations are assuming greater responsibility as agents of transformative and inclusive cooperation.

We are actively reshaping the global development agenda in the 21st century.

In the Financing for Development Conference in Sevilla, we faced the sobering truth that the current financial system is untenable. It is one that has fostered debt burdens and perpetuated power imbalance – a system that mires the poor and favors the wealthy.

Structural asymmetries undermine the ability of developing countries, particularly climate-vulnerable ones, to mobilize the scale and quality of finance required for resilient development.

Access to finance remains skewed. Climate-vulnerable developing countries face borrowing costs that exceed their projected growth rates.

The eligibility criteria for concessional finance is tied to outdated income classifications, with no account for risks and vulnerabilities faced by many countries that need such lifelines for sustaining their growth.

Reforms are long overdue.

Multilateral processes must confront the widening gap between climate ambition and the means of implementation, whether in terms of financial resources, technology transfer or capacity building.

Developed countries must fulfill their financial obligations. Multilateral development banks must do their part.

Climate finance is a binding commitment, as affirmed by the International Court of Justice in its unanimous Advisory Opinion last July.

We need to rebalance decision-making power in global financing institutions. Developing countries must be co-architects of systems that determine allocation, eligibility, and accountability.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates

As a maritime country known for its mega-biodiversity, the Philippines considers the sustainability of our environmental ecosystem as key to our climate and

economic resilience.

I am pleased to announce the Philippines' ratification of the BBNJ Agreement. This is in line with our commitment to the rules-based international order and *the 1982 UNCLOS*. We are determined to advance the just governance of the oceans and the conservation of marine biodiversity.

In our reflection on evolving multilateralism to be more fit-for-purpose, we must consider progress in the way we account for our stewardship of resources. Our economic models must account for the health of our planet.

We must measure our success in promoting development “in larger freedom” in our accountability to every nation and every person of the community. Societies thrive in diversity and inclusion.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

We stand in the midst of a global revolution – of people, of economies, and of technologies.

Migration straddles these changes. The movement of people across borders sustains growth in countries of origin, transit, and destination alike.

Every day, Filipino migrants across the world are a testament to this. They support health systems, advance education and boost creative economies.

The 1.9 million seafarers are the backbone of maritime trade that accounts for 90% of global commerce. The International Conference on Seafarers' Human Rights, Safety, and Well-being held in Manila early this month affirmed that states and stakeholders are ready to do more for them.

As migrants link our nations, their rights and dignity should be a gathering point, not a faultline, for governments.

Technology is the other defining force of our age: a connector, an enabler, an equalizer.

Artificial Intelligence offers promise but carries profound risks. We must help build digital societies that bridges development divides rather than widen them, conforming with safeguards against misuse.

STEADY HANDS

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Over the last 80 years, the UN Charter has served as a wellspring of purpose and action for those who rise equal to the task of delivering its promise.

There is no alternative to the United Nations. There is no good global order other than one based on international law and the principle of the sovereign equality of states.

A rules-based order is indispensable.

To maritime nations such as the Philippines, international law, particularly the 1982 Law of the Sea, is fundamental to our future.

While our government vessels and fisherfolk continue to be harassed in our own waters, and as we remain on the receiving end of illegal, coercive, aggressive, and dangerous actions in the South China Sea¹, we abide by the UNCLOS as reinforced by the binding 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea.

We are committed to diplomacy and other peaceful means to settle disputes.

At the birth of the UN, the Philippines actively helped in framing the foundational principle of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “*all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.*”

The early decades of the UN saw the spirited engagement of Filipino diplomats against colonization and apartheid² and economic inequality.

We have steadfastly strived for justice.

For its cause, we have helped manned the frontlines of climate diplomacy – from the drafting of the Climate Change Convention itself, to the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement.

We have engaged with the fire of a nation familiar with the brunt of devastation of disasters and extreme weather events. We know the urgency of global action.

¹ President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., Manila Strategic Forum

² The Philippines voted in favor of the 1960 Declaration on Decolonization and the adoption of the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.

Justice and equity was our guidepost during the crafting of the WHO Pandemic Agreement. The adoption of this treaty last May was a sweet spot in the Philippines' Presidency of the World Health Assembly.

Our pledge to peace is unwavering.

The Philippines was among the first to respond to the UN call for assistance in the Korean War. A decade later, Philippine troops flew halfway across the globe to aid in peacekeeping operations in the Congo. Since then, we have sent nearly 15,000 troops to 21 peacekeeping missions in Africa, Middle East, and Asia-Pacific.

This experience has taught us that peacekeeping is about empowering communities. It must carve exit strategies, with focused, non-politicized mandates from the Security Council. New models must be tailored to context and needs on the ground.

Then as now, we embrace our role as a bridge-builder: as General Carlos P. Romulo put it in 1946, a *“bridge between two worlds, among the first of many that must be erected to make them one.”*³

Then as now, we offer steady hands in New York, Geneva, Vienna, Bangkok, Nairobi, Rome, and the cradles of joint action as a ‘partner, pathfinder, and peacemaker.’

RIISING TO THE CALL OF THE UN AT 80

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Our world is far different from the world inhabited by the founders of the UN. Our new realities test the durability of the Charter at its eightieth year. The measure of credibility for the UN is whether it can hold its ‘sovereign promise’ in today’s world, where nations shape the future on equal terms.

As I conclude, I recall General Romulo’s words at the First UN General Assembly in 1946 that the Filipino stake in the United Nations is one of “an identical destiny, of shared anxiety, of hope and endeavor.”

³ Speech of Carlos P. Romulo at the 1st Session of the United Nations General Assembly:
<https://sites.google.com/dfa.gov.ph/ungarchiveph/by-speaker/1st-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly>

The journey of the entire family of the United Nations has been one of hope and endeavor.

In the strength of our diversity, the UN is the common vessel steering humanity through the onslaught of challenge and change.

We count on each other for the courage to hope, and courage to act. Let us persevere in purpose and action as a United Nations, so we can claim before those who came before us and those coming after, that we have risen to the challenges of our time, and have far exceeded our calling.

Thank you and *Mabuhay*.