Mr. Chairperson,

The Philippines aligns itself with the ASEAN Statement, and I would like to emphasize the following themes on behalf of the Philippines.

The United Nations has made great strides in pushing for global economic development and environmental protection. Member States have aligned their national agendas with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—hopefully putting an end to idiosyncratic economic theories doomed to failure and named after whoever happens to be in power—until he is not. The Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 is the 2030 Agenda tailored to national fit: same principles applied to national circumstances that are in part unique but in greater part common with the rest of the world.

The point I would like to make is that all the progress so far achieved can come to nothing if we fall short on the one existential imperative in the UN mission of a safe and peaceful world: disarmament and international security. The First Committee is the vanguard in this critical endeavor.

Each Member State has the responsibility to preserve the gains thus far made and protect the increasing prospect of success in staving off nuclear disaster.

Under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Philippines recognizes the merit in parallel efforts of nuclear non-proliferation. But the ultimate goal of the NPT is a world free of nuclear weapons. We lose their deterrent effect, to be sure; deterrence did keep wars cold despite the most heated provocations and the shocking lengths of violence to which conventional wars went. But from those one can always recover. From a nuclear war—well, there won’t be anyone left to look at it one way or the other.
The path to nuclear disarmament was agreed in the 13 Practical Steps and the 64-Point Action Plan. We have been urging nuclear weapon states to honor their end of the bargain and deliver without more delay and with no conditions.

The Philippines shares the concern that the nuclear weapons capabilities of the nuclear weapon states continue to be modernized and refined for greater accuracy and lethality. The problem with that, is that the more discrete and discriminating the use of nuclear weapons is made, the stronger the temptation to use them in the delusion that their destructiveness and catastrophic consequences can be managed, controlled, and recovered from. No way.

Last year, we signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Nuclear weapon states took exception. But the treaty does not displace or replace the NPT; but rather serves as the capstone of the nuclear disarmament architecture. It is that to which—from cornerstone up—the NPT builds up on both sides of the arc of safety—all the way up to the capstone that will hold the elements of nuclear weapons free world tightly in place.

The Ban Treaty fulfills the goal of the NPT. It delegitimizes, once and for all, the use of nuclear weapons in any situation.

The ultimate nightmare is a nuclear weapon in terrorist hands. It is a wonder it hasn’t happened. No society will survive it; one doubts if the world will. No one can fail to see the importance of stopping the spread of nuclear weapons to non-state parties, particularly through unstable states; and even through very stable states, let’s face it. Let’s not be hypocrites here.

The Philippines reiterates ASEAN’s welcome to the Agenda for Disarmament launched by Secretary General António Guterres. It expresses its wholehearted support for Malaysia as Chair of the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference. It is vital that we work together towards the success of these two events to ensure that the tremendous and never matched progress made in 2010—when Philippine Amb. Libran Cabactulan was RevCon President—is not undone. That is what the First Committee must prevent while pushing the process forward.

These are our own marching orders that we give to ourselves in the spirit of the United Nations: leading in step as we march alongside each other. It is the only way. END