General Debate of the First Committee  
(7th Meeting of the First Committee)  
Tuesday, 15 October 2019  
Conference Room 4, United Nations Headquarters, New York

PHILIPPINE STATEMENT  
By H.E. Ambassador Maria Teresa T. Almojuela  
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Mr. Chair,

The Philippines congratulates you on your assumption as Chair of the First Committee and aligns itself with the statement of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of Myanmar on behalf of ASEAN.

In this year’s UN General Assembly, our main aim is to inspire ambitious action to end poverty, respond to the climate threat and secure healthy, peaceful and prosperous lives for all. Member States have painstakingly developed national agendas aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UN Secretary General’s disarmament agenda has drawn proper emphasis to the interlinkages between disarmament and development, for disarmament that saves lives. All our achievements can be obliterated by nuclear war, or the use of weapons of mass destruction, or by the violence engendered by widespread illegal trade in and indiscriminate use of conventional weapons.

On nuclear weapons, the Philippines firmly believes that the NPT is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The Philippines continues to support the 13 Practical Steps and the 64-Point Action Plan that was agreed upon in the 2010 NPT Review Conference. On the third pillar of the NPT, the Philippines commends the IAEA for its invaluable contributions towards the acceleration of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, particularly in developing countries through its Technical Cooperation Programme, while ensuring a world that is safe, secure, and safeguarded. The Philippines believes that the success of the 2020 Review Conference on the Treaty’s 50th Anniversary will rest both on the celebration of the Treaty’s positive accomplishments as well as a decisive, uncompromising march towards a world free of nuclear weapons, on the basis of the commitments and obligations that underpin the Treaty.

We reiterate our call for the early entry into force of the CTBT – a fundamental instrument of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We therefore welcome the Final Declaration and Measures adopted last 25 September 2019 by the Article XIV Conference towards this end. The CTBT’s 168 ratifications thus far clearly demonstrate the broad international support for this instrument.

The Philippines is concerned about recent developments in the global security environment indicating the deepening of mistrust and the widening of the divide among State Parties, the modernization and refinement of nuclear weapon capabilities, and
the lowering of nuclear weapons-use thresholds. We call on the nuclear weapons states to fulfill their NPT commitments with sincerity and without conditions. We also call on relevant parties to reconsider their withdrawal or suspension of obligations from critical landmark agreements, in particular the INF Treaty and the JCPOA.

As we discuss regional disarmament, the Philippines emphasizes the role of nuclear-weapons free zones in reinforcing the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation framework. Stronger cooperation and coordination between and among them, and with the nuclear weapons states, would help affirm this important role. Fully aware of the critical importance of the 1995 outcome as it pertains to the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and WMD, the Philippines supports efforts to sustain and enhance dialogue and engagement.

On the other weapons of mass destruction, the Philippines takes an active role in the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). It is important to ensure the financial sustainability of the convention and deliberate on measures during the inter-sessional process that would strengthen international cooperation and preparedness, response and assistance and foster greater synergies between and among the relevant international organizations and with regional organizations. The Philippines supports all efforts to facilitate the achievement of concrete outcomes in the 2021 BWC Review Conference.

On conventional weapons, the proliferation of conventional arms has contributed to the alarming instability in many parts of the world. The Philippines believes that strong regulations covering conventional weapons including small arms, their ammunition, parts and components, should be supported and implemented. The Philippines became a state party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in January this year, and is now supporting the work of the Coordinating Committee on the Convention’s universalization.

We welcome the Vienna Conference on Protecting Civilians in Urban Warfare, which has deepened the engagement of states on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and the possible courses of action on a comprehensive international response moving forward.

We recognize that transnational cybercrime has far-reaching implications on the peace and security of states and our individual citizens. We support national and international efforts on this issue including the work of the Open-ended Working Group and the Group of Governmental Experts, both groups being outcomes of the First Committee resolutions of the 73rd Session of the UNGA.

Lastly, an important aspect of our work is the mainstreaming of gender issues in the disarmament processes. Fully concurring with the Secretary General’s call for building partnerships in our work, we advocate stronger collaboration with partner States, international organizations, NGOs, and research institutions to pursue and expand relevant initiatives.
Mr. Chair,

The Philippine delegation urges concerned parties to conclude consultations on the outstanding issues that prevent us from adopting the First Committee's Program of Work. Considering the critical work ahead of us, we urge the First Committee to adopt the Program of Work without any further delay.

As we proceed with the task ahead of us, we emphasize the critical importance of building trust and confidence in all areas. The Philippines encourages the resumption of constructive steps and positive engagement among concerned Member States to address issues on arms control and nuclear disarmament, particularly bilateral ones. We in the First Committee have the enormous responsibility in advancing the imperative in the UN's mission of a safe and peaceful world.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.