PHILIPPINE STATEMENT

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UN Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument
to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards Their Total Elimination
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Madame President,

The Philippines joins other delegations in congratulating you on your appointment as
President of this historic conference – a conference that, many of us will certainly work
tirelessly on to finally make progress on an important commitment we have made more
than four decades ago under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
(NPT).

Yours will be a daunting task, and the Philippine delegation assures you of our support
throughout this session and the next.

The Philippines is participating in this conference as an affirmation of our unequivocal
commitment to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. We especially attach great
importance to this cause, guided by the Philippine Constitution, which mandates us to
adopt and pursue a policy of freedom from nuclear weapons in our territory.

As an active member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which
the Philippines currently chairs, my country is also signatory to the Bangkok Treaty that
created a nuclear weapons free zone in Southeast Asia.
While the Philippines does not possess nuclear weapons, it is incumbent upon our government to protect the millions of Filipinos living and working in countries that are vulnerable and susceptible to nuclear harm.

And by nuclear harm we do not simply refer to state-sponsored attacks and those by non-state actors, but also those that may be caused by natural calamities such as what happened in Fukushima.

It is plain and simple, and we will keep on saying it – that so long as nuclear weapons exist, the threat to humanity's destruction is imminent and real.

Madame President,

This Conference will not be possible if not for determined efforts over the past years by many Member States to jumpstart discussions on nuclear disarmament.

I wish to recall the successful 2010 NPT Review Conference, during which Member States expressed, and I quote, “deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and reaffirms the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.”

The humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons cannot be underestimated. No State will be able to effectively respond to a humanitarian crisis as a result of an accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional detonation of a nuclear weapon.

The personal account of Mr. Fujimori this morning gives us a glimpse of the horrors of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

Madame President,

This Conference is also an answer to Article VI of the NPT, whose implementation is long overdue: “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

The Philippines takes the view that this Conference and its objectives do not undermine the NPT, but on the contrary, strengthens this landmark treaty.

No less than the International Court of Justice penned in its advisory opinion of 08 July 1996 that, quote, “there exist an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control,” unquote. Sadly, more than two decades later, the international community still struggles to fulfill this obligation.
It is for these reasons that the Philippines joined 113 Member States in calling for this Conference, under UN General Assembly resolution 70/33, to arrive at a legally binding instrument which will put all nuclear weapons of the world finally on the path of extinction.

Only through a transparent and inclusive process of diplomacy and dialogue will the nuclear disarmament agenda be kept alive and succeed. And so we lament the fact that some Member States, including those that possess the world’s largest nuclear arsenals, have opted not to participate in a Conference whose aim complements their own – of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We have a common ground, and no ground for disagreement. The onus is on them to demonstrate to the world that they remain committed to their own cause of nuclear disarmament.

The Philippines is very much cognizant of present geopolitical realities. It is precisely because of these geopolitical dynamics that we must all the more secure the world from nuclear weapons. There will never be a better time than now to discuss the prohibition of such weapons.

Madame President,

As we commence our discussions, I would like to take this opportunity to state in general terms the Philippines' positions.

First, the Philippines believes that the most viable option for immediate action is to negotiate a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons and pronouncing an unambiguous political commitment to the achievement and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons. The instrument may contain a phased program and timeframe for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons for States that possess nuclear weapons, once they acceded to the treaty.

Second, the treaty must contain provisions for a verification system. The treaty will be for naught if we have no system in place to confirm that States Parties are abiding by their obligation. Furthermore, a system must be in place to ensure that States that possess nuclear weapons, after acceding to the treaty, are indeed reducing their stockpiles and are dismantling and destroying their weapons, and that the process they are undertaking is irreversible.

The Philippines maintains that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has proven to be beneficial to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation by stigmatizing nuclear test explosions. However, this is not a substitute for a permanent legally binding commitment to end nuclear weapons testing and all other nuclear explosions which can only be achieved by the entry into force of the CTBT. Once the treaty is in force, member states will be able to request on-site verification if they suspect a nuclear explosion has taken place I violation of the treaty.
Third, we fully support the creation, at the appropriate time, of a Secretariat with its own staff to facilitate the treaty implementation.

Fourth, we must also prepare to assist States in fully implementing the obligations that are to be included in this treaty. Our prohibition treaty must have mechanisms able to provide assistance to States in need so as to ensure compliance.

Lastly, Madame President, the Philippines expresses fervent hope that Member States would remain true to their commitments and contribute actively to our discussions in the days ahead with the needed flexibility.

Thank you.