



**PHILIPPINE STATEMENT AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE
46TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**
Geneva, Switzerland (24 February 2021)

Delivered by
Hon. Menardo I. Guevarra
Secretary (Minister) of Justice of the Philippines

Madame President,
Madame High Commissioner,
Excellencies,

Greetings from Manila.

Last year, I shared before this Council the commitment of the Philippines to uphold human rights, the rule of law and the democratic form of governance.

Today, I provide updates on our efforts to further promote and protect the human rights, security, and well-being of our people.

As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippines launched the largest emergency subsidy program in its history to support vulnerable sectors. These include low-income households, older persons, women and children, displaced migrant workers and their families, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities.

The Government of the Philippines welcomed the constructive approach in Human Rights Council Resolution 45/33, adopted on 7 October 2020. Since its adoption, we have engaged actively and openly with the UN to support the development of the technical cooperation programme referred to in the resolution - the UN Joint Programme on Human Rights. The UN in the Philippines has held a series of consultations with Government actors, the Commission on Human Rights, and civil society. Based on these consultations, the Secretary of Justice, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights, and the UN Resident Coordinator endorsed on 27 November a core matrix setting out key directions for the programme, aligned with the six areas in the

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resolution. The UN entities involved - the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Office for Drugs and Crimes, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism - are each contributing with their respective expertise. Although we have yet to formally sign the project document in the coming weeks, I have the pleasure to announce that a few activities that are part of the programme have already started, notably the holding of a Human Rights Summit last 7 December.

The Philippine Government will continue this path of constructive engagement and regularly inform Member States and stakeholders of the progress of the Joint Program.

Excellencies,

Peace, justice and human rights are interrelated pursuits. An integral part to the Philippine commitment to human rights is the continuous strengthening of its domestic accountability mechanisms. This, while standing firm on the President's promise to protect the nation from illegal drugs, a campaign widely supported by our people.

In June of last year, I announced the creation of an Inter-Agency Review Panel that would reexamine cases of anti-illegal drug operations where deaths occurred. Despite challenges to physical mobility and access to case files occasioned by the pandemic and the devastating typhoons that hit our country in the last few months of 2020, a contingent from our Department of Justice examined available records in certain key areas and cities where most of these deaths during illegal drug operations occurred. Our initial and preliminary findings confirm that in many of these cases, law enforcement agents asserted that the subject of the anti-drug operations resisted arrest or attempted to draw a weapon and fight back. Yet no full examination of the weapon recovered was conducted, no verification of its ownership undertaken, and no request for ballistic examination or paraffin test was pursued until its completion. It was also noted, among others, that in more than half of the records reviewed, the law enforcement agents involved failed to follow standard protocols pertaining to coordination with other agencies and the processing of the crime scene.

We have referred these initial findings to our national police authorities, and we have been informed that the appropriate internal investigation of thousands of these incidents had

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been conducted, and scores of police officers had been recommended for administrative and criminal action. It is now the immediate task of the Review Panel to ensure that these recommendations have been acted upon and carried out by the proper disciplinary authorities, and that measures are adopted to minimize loss of lives during legitimate law enforcement operations against illegal drugs.

Excellencies,

During the 44th Session of this Council, our country also undertook to engage more closely with our Commission on Human Rights (CHR). In pursuit of this commitment, we have initiated discussions with the CHR on how we could collaborate in the work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Extra-Legal Killings, Enforced Disappearances, Torture, and other Grave Violations of the Right to Life, Liberty and Security of Persons, more particularly in case build-up and evidence gathering. We have also agreed to work together for the early passage of a law that will establish our National Preventive Mechanism, as mandated under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.

In closing, the Philippines strongly emphasizes that its legal and judicial system and domestic accountability mechanisms are functioning as they should.

We reject any attempt by any external entity to assume jurisdiction over internal matters which are being addressed more than adequately by our national institutions and authorities.

Excellencies,

Global threats such as illegal drugs, terrorism, and the COVID-19 pandemic pose common challenges that the world community must confront together to overcome.

We enjoin this Council to uphold the primacy of dialogue and cooperation, as it carries out its important mandate and noble duty to the community of nations. Thank you. END