



PHILIPPINES

**STATEMENT OF
SECRETARY ALAN PETER S. CAYETANO
AT THE
72ND SESSION OF THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
23 September 2017**

Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of GOD. Matthew 5:9

Mr. President, Excellencies,

The path to peace must be walked with patience. To achieve any purpose with others—be they powers or people, patience is needed. The opposite of patience is impatience—the cause and aggravation of conflict.

Someone said that “Talk, talk is better than war, war.” Listening is even better than talking. We must listen to others more than we listen to ourselves. Hopefully we know what we are talking about. But others may know what we do not. We can learn only if we stop talking, and listen.

We may think we know how others can do things better than they’ve done it. Maybe our way is more efficient. But the time

gained by that efficiency will be time lost convincing others that our way is better, rather than a compromise between our way and theirs.

Real change in the world order necessitates cooperation. Nothing affecting others can be undertaken without their willing involvement, without getting their agreement on the purpose and manner of it. Achieving a shared purpose beyond any single one's ability requires cooperation.

But how else can we get cooperation if not with the patience to explain why it is needed—and the equal patience to listen.

This is why we have the United Nations, the largest cooperative endeavor in human history. We use the UN to speak out but equally also to listen. And somehow arrive at a consensus, or at least a modus vivendi on how to proceed—in peace and therefore with a greater prospect of progress.

The theme for this year's session— *“Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet”*— captures a promise that everyone who has stood here vowed to fulfill for his people, and the rest of the peoples of the United Nations, as the Preamble of the Charter puts it.

Yet, after 72 years, while much has been achieved, much more has to be done. The promise is still very much a work in progress.

We, the peoples of the United Nations, battle new threats that undermine such success as we've achieved, and frustrate further

progress in peace, development and human rights— the three pillars of the United Nations.

Your theme, Mr. President, mirrors the Philippines own people-centered agenda as articulated by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte.

President Duterte and The Filipino People are committed to real change, to finally carrying out long needed reforms, to addressing national threats long ignored, protecting the human rights of all Filipinos, while doing our part in attaining regional peace and stability.

We remain true to our obligations under the international treaties we have ratified. We have made much sacrifices and continue to be willing to make sacrifices.

The Philippines integrates the human rights agenda in its development initiatives for the purpose of protecting everyone, especially the most vulnerable, from lawlessness, violence, and anarchy; particularly families, women and children, the poor, indigenous people, migrant workers, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

This is why we have a massive campaign to restore the rule of law by fighting corruption, crime and illegal drugs. We owe it to the 10 million Filipinos working overseas to keep their children and family safe. We owe this to the all Filipino Families.

The very principle of The Responsibility to Protect must encompass first and foremost the vast majority of peaceful law-abiding people who must be protected from those who are not. It is for their safety and sustenance that states exist, and for which governments and leaders are responsible.

President Duterte said fewest words and made least promises in the campaign because he listened. He listened and he heard what none of the other candidates would listen to. The vast majority of Filipinos felt vulnerable in their lives and livelihoods, unsafe in the rising drug-driven criminality that threatened those least able to protect themselves. They were also those past governments had least protected: poor and ordinary folk.

The Philippines comprehensive campaign against illegal drugs is necessary instrument to preserve and protect the human rights of all Filipinos, and never an instrument to violate any individual's or group's human rights.

War vs. Illegal Drugs

It was noted in this hall, that “all sovereign nations must uphold two core sovereign obligations: to respect the interests of their own people and the sovereignty of other nations.” This is true as much in bi-lateral relations between sovereign countries, as when they combine multilaterally on some common decision or action. The Philippines is a sovereign country. Indeed, it was the first subject nation to win its independence however short-lived, thereby earning the honor of being the First Republic in Asia. It expects that sovereignty to be respected, and that its

democratically-elected government's assessment of threats and how to go about addressing them shall be accorded preeminence among nations—or at least the benefit of their doubt.

We prize sovereignty in all its aspects. We acknowledge the wisdom, and borrow the words here spoken: “All responsible leaders have an obligation to serve their own citizens first.” In keeping with that obligation, it is a state's duty to protect human life, human dignity, and human rights—from aggression by other states, terrorism from non-state actors, and the destruction of societies and families from criminal networks trafficking in drugs, people and arms.

As a responsible leader, the Philippine president launched a vigorous campaign against the illegal drug trade to save lives, preserve families, protect communities and stop the country's slide into a narco-state. An epidemic that would spell the end of sovereignty in any meaningful sense.

As of August 2017, the drug trade had penetrated at least 24,848 barangays. This is 59% of the total of 42,036 of the smallest government units spanning our archipelago, the ones directly in touch with our people. Where is sovereignty in a country where vast numbers are addicted to drugs and enslaved to their suppliers?

To be sure, drug addiction calls for cure and not chastisement. When the President showed his fierce determination to end the drug menace, 1.3 million drug users turned themselves in. But the neglect of the drug problem by previous governments has left the

current one hard pressed to rehabilitate them all. We are thankful that generous souls at home and abroad are building centers all around the country.

While drug addiction calls for rehabilitation, drug trafficking surely calls for stern measures—though always consistent with the rule of law. The President has and will always have zero-tolerance for abusive cops, as time will show.

But accusation before investigation is not proof. Nor is it fair. Abuses have occurred and mistakes have been made, tragic ones for sure. While one abuse is one too many, still the abuses are far less than the imaginary numbers of partisan accusers and publicity seekers. The drug trade has penetrated even law enforcement. And yet we are getting a message that the best way to stop abuses in the antidrug campaign is to stop the campaign and live with drugs instead.

But we cannot live with drugs because drugs will not let us live. We can no more live with drugs than with terrorism, which, the United Nations admits, and as we have discovered is funded by the drug trade. This has created the new phenomenon of criminal insurgency.

In the century before last, a huge and well-populated Asian country was enslaved by a maritime power which flooded it with drugs.

We welcome this opportunity to address the international community's concerns and correct the perceptions gleaned from

media reports that deny the real scale of the problem as if denial is a solution. The problem is huge and we will not reduce it in our imagination because we dare not face it in reality.

Appeasement emboldens evil. We counsel patience but delay will make the problem bigger until it is beyond containment and control. Indeed, as we have heard in this hall, “When decent people and nations become bystanders, the forces of destruction only gather power and strength.” We will not slide down the slope of complacency, and of willful ignorance of the threat to our country and our people posed by the drug trade.

Counterterrorism and Violent Extremism

In the past four years, we have seen the rise of the Islamic State and how it has been able to spread its nihilistic ideology beyond Iraq and Syria to become a serious threat to the world.

We should hold no illusion that the threat posed by the Islamic State will be over with the collapse of its self-proclaimed caliphate in Iraq and very soon in Syria. Rather, we should all be ready to confront a very potent threat that has spread to other parts of the world.

In the Philippines, we have discovered the intimate and symbiotic relationship between terrorism vis-à-vis poverty and the illegal drug trade. These terrorists were somehow able to bring together an assortment of extremists, criminals, mercenaries and foreign fighters who attempted but failed to take control of Marawi. This

was part of their grand plan to establish in Southeast Asia an extension of their shattered caliphate in the Middle East.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines shall regain full control of Marawi from Islamic State-inspired terrorists. Their protracted hold on their last several square meters of the city is largely a result of superior arms illegally obtained, and the presence of civilian hostages used by them as human shields. There is also the government's forbearance to unleash greater force so as to avoid collateral loss of life. The fight has been terrible but the effort has been patient and done with care to spare the innocent. There's been less talk and more listening to those with the most at stake in the struggle: the people of Marawi. The disturbance will be over soon and the rebuilding of Marawi will begin shortly.

Terrorism is a global problem that no country can tackle alone; although here at the UN it was noted with some admiration that Filipino families outside the conflict zone quickly absorbed most of the 200,000 displaced civilians. Our main disaster preparedness is compassion. The Filipino family system is strong and cooperation is a Philippine tradition: help from fellow Filipinos is always at hand. While the main burden is borne by our government and people, and all the risks are taken by our soldiers, we are thankful for such assistance as the international community has extended. Thank you dear friends for helping when we needed it most.

The Philippines welcomes the creation of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Office to bring into a cohesive whole the work on counterterrorism by Member States and the UN. It will be a

sharing of experiences and sober reflections rather than of blind anxieties. That way lies real results.

Rule of Law

As a founding member of the UN, the Philippines has been a strong advocate of the rule of law. We uphold the core of the UN mission - to draw upon the strength and sovereign equality of its members to achieve their common goals.

Mr. President,

Centuries ago, the ambition for land to take invited long and terrible wars. The battle has shifted to the seas, hence the need to affirm our commitment to UNCLOS, as the international law governing the rights and responsibilities of States Parties in their use of the world's oceans.

The issues are numerous, intertwined and complex. Territorial claims, Sovereignty rights, security and protection of marine life and resources, to name a few.

Dialogue, building trust and promoting cooperation to address issues of concern is the way forward in addressing maritime disputes.

The Philippines, as ASEAN Chairman this year, looks forward to commencing negotiations on the long-overdue code of conduct in West Philippine Sea/South China Sea. We thank the individual

ASEAN states and China for their utmost cooperation in this endeavor.

Again in this work, patience, a lot of listening, and willingness to work with rather than against each other, is essential.

We live in a global community and we are all citizens of the world. Today, our social contract is no longer confined to the nation state. In our region, we exert efforts to build bridges and not walls, to emphasize commonalities and not differences, to think less that we are Filipinos, Thai, Indonesian, Japanese, Koreans, Chinese and think more of ourselves as Asians. Beyond being Asians we are global citizens, the people of the United Nations.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW

Human rights and the dignity of every person is the main pillar of the United Nations. So it is for the Philippines. As a very spiritual people we are united in believing that man was created in GOD's image. That there can be no compromise on human rights—of those who break the law and surely, too, of those who are their victims. We also believe in accountability, not least in the practical conviction that as we sow so shall we reap.

We should never tolerate human rights abuses but neither should we tolerate misinformation, fake news on and politicization of human rights, for these undermine our collective efforts as the United Nations to uphold the universality of human rights and dignity of human life.

But why debate security versus human rights? Security and human rights are not incompatible. Indeed, the first is our duty to the other. Without security, the most basic human rights, to life and safety, are constantly under attack—from terrorism, criminality, drug and human trafficking.

PEACE AND SECURITY

Much has been said about ASEAN. Words like cooperation, consultation and consensus are identified with it. Critics have remarked on the slowness of ASEAN's way of proceeding. Yet slow as ASEAN's progress has been, that progress has been solid, substantive and irreversible—precisely because of the patience with which it was made; thereby proving that consensus-based organizations work better.

Five decades ago, Southeast Asia was marred by conflicts, and all previous attempts at Southeast Asian regionalism proved extremely difficult. Our different cultures and differing ideologies and political systems only reinforced this pessimistic outlook.

Fifty years hence, the ASEAN miracle prevails with greater political and economic prospects that have gripped global interest. ASEAN has overcome the divisions, fears, and hostilities of the past. We have used regional cooperation to promote growth, development and integration and peaceful settlement of disputes.

Today, the Philippines patiently builds stronger relationships with the international community through the ASEAN and the United Nations. We remain a friend to all and an enemy to none—to bridge, to build, a more peaceful, secure and stable world.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

There is no development without peace, and no peace without development. This is what the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides. It serves as the template of the Philippine Development Plan called ***Ambisyon Natin 2040*** or Our Ambition 2040.

While the Philippines has experienced unprecedented economic growth, we are adopting measures to make growth more inclusive by massive poverty alleviation programs, creating more jobs, driving innovation, making quality education universally available. Relevant education that imparts training and skill building to make people resilient in changing markets, building greater trust in government with the hope for result of raising tens of millions of Filipinos from poverty.

There is a link between increasing poverty, corruption and a deteriorating environment. President Rodrigo Roa Duterte seeks to reverse this linkage by addressing the adverse effects of climate change – to which the Philippines is most vulnerable – through disaster risk reduction and through strict implementation of laws protecting the environment.

To honor the immense sacrifices of our 10 Million Filipinos abroad – and all other migrant workers of the world making huge sacrifices so that their families may have a better life – we press on with our advocacy of the Global Compact on Migration. As we seek to improve conditions for foreign nationals living and working in the Philippines, we advocate the fundamental concept of loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. We call on the UN to elevate migration in its agenda.

Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

If we listen to each other, we will hear the same thing. We have no need for nuclear weapons. There is absolutely no benefit in another cold war, neither in an arms race. We want nuclear weapons to be a thing of the past and we do not want an arms race anywhere in the world.

On July 7, the Philippines joined 121 other member-states in securing our world from weapons of mass destruction by adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Three days ago, I signed the Treaty. The Philippines calls on Member States with nuclear weapons to likewise sign on. We can only have a safe world if we get rid of all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. By doing so, we “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.”

The Philippines, on its own, and as this year’s chair of ASEAN, has expressed its grave concern over the growing tensions in the Korean Peninsula because of the Democratic People’s Republic

of Korea's missile test launches and detonations. The Philippines joins the call on the DPRK to put a stop to its provocations, which bring us closer to an unimaginable scenario: a war to end all wars because no one will be left to fight new ones.

CONCLUSION

Let me end where I began and call again for patience, for listening and for cooperation, focused always on the wellbeing of, to quote the Charter's preamble, "We, the peoples of the United Nations."

Let us listen to each other as we are the people of the United Nations. Our Faith and destiny as human beings of this planet are intertwined.

In a situation like the present, where every finger in and around the Korean Peninsula is on a trigger, every eye is out for a wrong move, the likelihood of a surprise attack is virtually zero. In that situation, no one can be caught by surprise and unprepared to strike back.

So what is there to lose by going on talking and listening until the very last moment?

Patience, listening as much as talking, cooperation among friends and even enemies: these are the signposts on the path of peace.

Peace is about peoples. No people and no country can have a national identity if there are no others who can tell the difference.

Without peoples—each one different yet all the same in their being and in the good they seek—it is impossible to imagine the world. To utter the phrase “the world” means a planet with many peoples sharing it.

All of us are pieces of a giant puzzle. We seek to be completed by being pieced together thereby creating a whole, beautiful picture. In a war of all against all, of everyone each against the other, the last man standing is not at peace he is but a single piece. He is not the victor he is simply alone.

Thank you Mr. President.