

PRESS RELEASE

Philippine Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva

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JUSTICE SECRETARY HIGHLIGHTS PROGRESS IN WORK OF PHILIPPINE ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS



Secretary of Justice Menardo I. Guevarra represents the Philippines during the High-Level Segment of the 49th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council on 01 March 2022.

01 March 2022, Geneva, Switzerland – Capping his engagement with the UN Human Rights Council as head of the Philippine delegation under the incumbent administration, Secretary of Justice Menardo I. Guevarra updated the body on concrete progress in the work of national accountability mechanisms at the High-Level Segment of the 49th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC49).

“The Review Panel formed under the Department of Justice which I lead is now prepared to endorse to the Philippine National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) two hundred fifty (250) cases that involve reported deaths arising from the government’s anti-illegal drugs operations in the Central Luzon area,” remarked Secretary Guevarra.

He also cited that four of the 52 cases previously endorsed to the NBI have reached actual prosecution in courts and that the NBI is currently preparing five more complaints to initiate the prosecution process against erring law enforcement operatives.

The work of the Review Panel has been complemented by the Inter-Agency Committee also known as the AO35 mechanism which handles cases of extra-legal killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and other grave violations. 15 Special Investigation Teams were created in the past year alone to look into specific cases.

“The Committee has recently completed its investigation and will shortly initiate the process to prosecute a number of law enforcement officers involved in the service of judicial warrants which resulted in the death of known activists in Southern Luzon,” assured Secretary Guevarra.

Consistent with the country’s constructive cooperation with UN instrumentalities, Secretary Guevarra cited the AO35 mechanism’s continuous dialogue with the office of the UN Resident Coordinator and the Special Rapporteur on summary executions for capacity-building initiatives, specifically on the 1991 Minnesota Protocol on Investigations of Potentially Unlawful Deaths.

As he underlined the determination of Philippine justice and law enforcement institutions to instill respect for human rights and exact accountability for violators, Secretary Guevarra also underscored the line drawn by the government between parties that engage in good faith and those that abuse and exploit these mechanisms to make demands of accountability with little or no factual basis

With the forthcoming national elections in May and the change in administration in the middle of the year, Secretary Guevarra provided assurances that the country’s commitment and positive engagements will remain unaffected. ###