

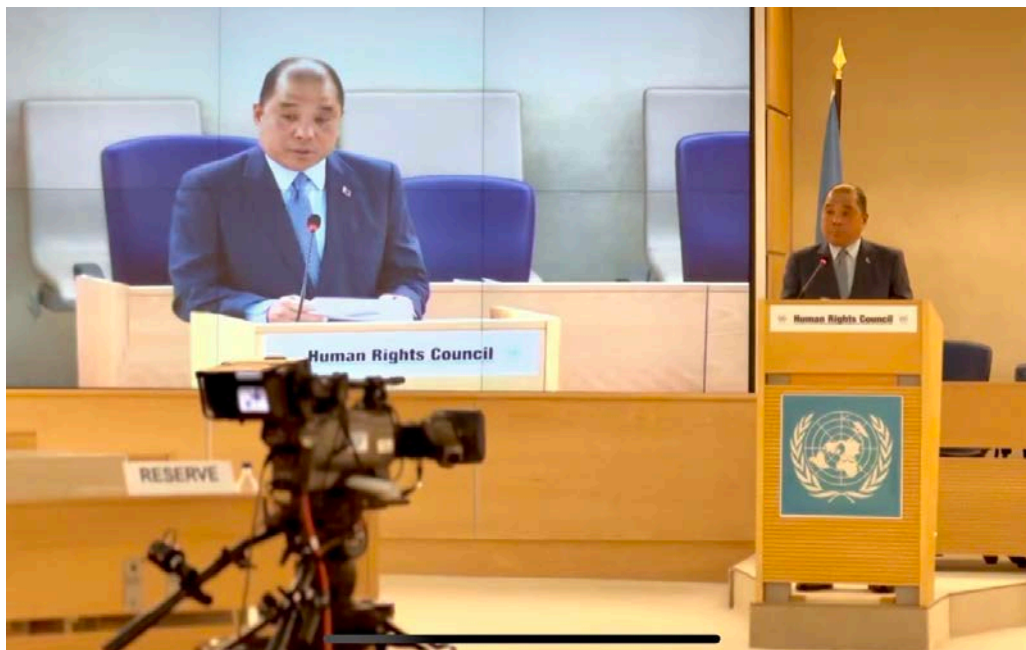
PRESS RELEASE



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



NATIONAL OWNERSHIP KEY TO EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE MULTILATERAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION – PHILIPPINES TELLS UN RIGHTS BODY IN GENEVA AT ITS 55TH REGULAR SESSION



Philippine Justice Undersecretary Raul T. Vasquez delivers the Philippine National Statement at the High-Level Segment of the 55th Session of the Human Rights Council on 27 February 2024 in Geneva.

GENEVA – Philippine Justice Undersecretary Raul T. Vasquez stressed the importance of national ownership of human rights actions in the context of multilateral technical cooperation at the High-Level Segment of the 55th Session of the Human Rights Council, held in Geneva on 27 February 2024. This is one of the key lessons learned by the Philippines from decades of open and active engagement with the international community, informing the government’s decision to embark on a three-year joint program on human rights with the United Nations (UNJP).

The UNJP, which will end in July 2024, provided a platform for Philippine agencies to work with UN bodies and civil society organizations to strengthen existing domestic

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human rights mechanisms in support of the government's rights-based development agenda. Among the major accomplishments of the UNJP are: enhancement of drug rehabilitation and recovery programs and the Philippine National Police's online data gathering and assessment systems on human rights compliance; establishment of a digital tracking system to monitor the implementation of treaty obligations and other human rights commitments; revival of the Barangay Human Rights Action Center to mainstream human rights promotion at the grassroots level; and capacity-building for civil society organizations.

Usec. Vasquez also shared that the Justice Department adopted new rules to enhance the criminal justice system, including the rules on case-build-up, automatic dismissal of cases, higher degree of proof in filing criminal cases, and the liberalization of Bail Guidelines.

"The UNJP has been beneficial to the country across the board. It was a shot in the arm and we are now fully back on track. There is a renewed sense responsibility and commitment to human rights in the whole bureaucracy. We are convinced that effective technical cooperation should not create relations of dependency. Instead, it should enhance the country's capacity to move the reform process forward with full national ownership, while maintaining spaces for focused collaborative undertakings with relevant external partners", Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN Carlos D. Sorreta added.

To build on the UNJP gains, the Philippines will establish a human rights coordinating council (HRCC) and training institute for forensic science and investigation, and adopt a comprehensive human rights action plan.

Noting the serious challenges to the credibility of UN human rights mechanisms as made evident by the paucity of effective responses to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Usec. Vasquez called for enhanced multilateralism by navigating *"with greater pragmatism the complex interplay between sovereignty and international obligations"*.

The Philippines reiterated its call for effective and immediate solutions to ensure unimpeded entry of humanitarian aid to Gaza and uphold Palestine's primordial desire for freedom and self-determination guaranteeing peace and security for both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

"We cannot allow the whole system to unravel. This is what stands between order – imperfect and precarious it may be – and pure anarchy. Let us reinvigorate our multilateral institutions that is firmly anchored on international law where justice and human rights reign," Usec. Vasquez stressed.



The Philippine delegation led by Justice Undersecretary Raul T. Vasquez (forefront) and (L-R, background) PHRCS Undersecretary Severo S. Catura, First Secretary Luningning Camoying Valdez of Geneva PH, and Justice Undersecretary Jesse H.T. Andres.

Joining Usec Vasquez in the Philippine delegation are Amb. Carlos D. Sorreta, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the UN in Geneva (Geneva PM), Undersecretary Jesse H.T. Andres of the Department of Justice, Undersecretary Severo S. Catura of the Presidential Human Rights Committee, First Secretary Luningning Camoying Valdez of Geneva PM, and Dir. Janice Sanchez-Rivera of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

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The High-Level Segment of 55th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC55) gathers together heads of states/governments, ministers, vice-ministers and other dignitaries of UN member states to exchange views on pressing global human rights issues. HRC55 runs from 26 February to 5 April 2024. **END**