

PRESS RELEASE

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



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PH HAS SOLID FOUNDATION, STRONG RESOLVE TO BOOST DOMESTIC MECHANISMS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION – PH ENVOY TELLS UN RIGHTS BODY AT ADOPTION OF PH PERIODIC REVIEW REPORT



Philippine Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other International Organizations, H.E. Evan P. Garcia, delivers his opening statement at the adoption of the report of the Working Group of the UN Human Rights Council on the 4th Cycle Universal Periodic Review on compliance with international human rights obligations.

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND – Philippine Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva, H.E. Evan P. Garcia, led the Philippine Delegation to the Adoption of the Report of the Working Group of the UN Human Rights Council on the Philippines 4th Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on the country's implementation of international human rights obligations, held on 27 March 2023.

Underscoring that the Philippines has a solid foundation and strong resolve to enhance domestic frameworks and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights in fulfillment of international obligations, Ambassador Garcia announced that the Philippines accepted 215 out of 289 recommendations received from various member states at the UPR, which was held on 14 November 2022. These recommendations cover the following major areas, among others:

- Implementation of the Philippine Human Rights Plan and the UN Joint Programme on Human Rights (UNJP);
- Conduct of independent investigations on alleged human rights violation cases, including allegations of extra-judicial killings;
- Protection of human rights defenders and journalists;

- Further expansion of access to justice;
- Maintenance of the moratorium on the death penalty;
- Establishment of a national preventive mechanism on torture;
- Enhancement of efforts to combat discrimination and gender-based violence;
- Promotion of the rights to education, health, and adequate standard of living;
- Upholding the rights of persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, women, children, refugees, and stateless persons; and
- Enhancement of the work of the Commission on Human Rights.

Amb. Garcia stated that the Philippines under President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. pursues a rights-based development agenda anchored on a *“rich and progressive corpus of laws and policies covering the whole gamut of human rights”*. He noted that during the review period the Philippines enacted legislations providing for universal healthcare and access to quality tertiary education, safe spaces for women and girls, and special protection of children in situations of armed conflict. The country has criminalized child marriage, raised the minimum age of sexual consent from 12 to 16, enhanced mechanisms to combat human trafficking and online sexual abuse of children, and created a department solely devoted to migrant workers’ affairs. Amb. Garcia likewise stated that the Philippines enacted the Magna Carta of the Poor in 2021 and crafted the National Climate Change Action Plan 2011-2028.

Acknowledging that nurturing a just and humane society is a never-ending process where partnerships and openness to fair scrutiny play a positive role, Amb. Garcia underscored that the Philippines is fully committed to sustaining constructive engagement with UN human rights mechanisms and bilateral partners in the area of human rights.

On 30-31 March 2023, the Philippines will engage in a constructive dialogue with the Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers and later this year with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Philippine Government is likewise ready to welcome the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression for a country visit in the last quarter of 2023.



Amb. Garcia also noted that the Philippines has a long-running technical cooperation program with the European Union on justice system reform and other human rights engagements in the context of the latter's special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance.

The Philippines will participate in the Summit for Democracy hosted by the United States on 28-30 March 2023 and looks forward to contributing to meaningful discussions on how to reinvigorate democratic institutions at a time of great challenges.

“After more than a century of nation-building and democratic consolidation, the Philippines is today a robust democracy that attaches the highest value to upholding the rights and dignity of all Filipinos. We acknowledge that difficult challenges remain and more action is expected and required from the State as duty-bearer. The Philippine Government under the Marcos Administration is up to the task,” Amb. Garcia stated.



The Philippine delegation, headed by H.E. Evan P. Garcia (4th from left), is joined by H.E. Marc Bichler of Luxemburg (5th from left), Deputy Permanent Representative Kristine Leilani Salle (3rd from left), First Secretary and Consul Luningning Camoying Valdez (1st from left), and officials from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to mark the conclusion of the adoption proceedings by the UN HRC Working Group of the Philippines' 4th Cycle Periodic Review on compliance with international human rights obligations.

The UPR is a State-led process that reviews the human rights situation of countries through a collaborative dialogue among members of the Human Rights Council, other UN Member States, and other stakeholders including NGOs. The Philippines joined 13 other States (Algeria, Bahrain, Brazil, Ecuador, Finland, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Netherlands, Poland, South Africa, Tunisia, United Kingdom) in the list of countries reviewed during the 41st Session of the UPR Working Group that took place on 7-18 November 2022, in Geneva. **END**