



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
STATEMENT

Plenary Session, Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking
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Delivered by

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MR. CHAIRMAN,
EXCELLENCIES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

1. The Philippines would like to thank the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for its generous contribution that have made it possible to have the *Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking*. My delegation is greatly encouraged to see the presence of many delegates from a broad spectrum of society, a clear signal that we are seriously concerned and committed to take collective action to address one of the most abhorrent crimes of our time.

MR. CHAIRMAN,

2. Globalization undoubtedly has posed a number of opportunities and challenges to many countries. Economic opportunities in the more affluent part of the world, for example, have encouraged greater labour mobility especially from countries with a large population still living in poverty. But the phenomenon of labour migration has also opened unwelcome opportunities for criminal elements to carry out human trafficking operations on a wider scale and reach and in increasingly organized and sophisticated ways
3. The Philippines, being one of the early labour exporting countries, understands fully well the endless challenges of addressing the problem. Our government realizes that employment through sustained economic growth is key to taking people out of poverty and an incentive to keeping its people from going overseas to seek jobs.
4. The Philippine economy has been making remarkable progress. However, the fruits of its economic development have still some way to go to fully trickle down to the masses. Together with the desire to seek better economic opportunities in order to secure a comfortable life for their families, personal

advancement and a cultural predilection towards emigration, our citizens continue to leave the country, and have become particularly vulnerable to human trafficking.

Domestic Actions to Combat Human Trafficking

5. The Philippine Government therefore places high priority to the protection of its migrant workers.
6. The Philippines has developed a robust and comprehensive anti-trafficking regime that is one of the most advanced in Asia, founded on legislative, *regulatory*, and institutional social support systems.
7. Our legislations include the "Mail-Order Bride Law", the "Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act"; and the "Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995".
8. The crown of our anti-human trafficking legislation is the "Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act" (Republic Act 9208), one of the first - and specific -- anti-trafficking legislation enacted in Asia. Its comprehensive provisions cover prevention, law enforcement, prosecution, penalties, and rehabilitation-and-reintegration services to victims. The passage of this law has already resulted in major convictions of traffickers.
9. An important feature of our anti-trafficking law is the institutionalization at the national and local levels of a coalition-building approach that brings together key government agencies and relevant civil society groups under an "Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT)". This ensures the coherent and coordinated implementation of responses to the problem.
10. The Philippine Foreign Service has also been mobilized to provide, in cooperation with relevant institutions and NGOs in labour destination countries, temporary shelter, counselling, and medical assistance to its distressed nationals.
11. Since 1992, the United Nations, the Philippines has been the proponent, 1992, of a UN General Assembly Resolution on "Trafficking in Women and

Girls”¹. The resolution highlights the need to address the supply and demand factors that drive human trafficking, as well as the need to incorporate a human rights and gender-based perspective in anti-trafficking measures.

Philippine Perspectives

MR. CHAIRMAN,

12. Let me now share with delegations what we consider as integral, indispensable elements of efforts to combat human trafficking.

Addressing Both Supply-and-Demand Factors

13. First, the Philippines has always emphasized that any discussion on human trafficking should adopt a balanced perspective by addressing both the supply and demand factors that drive the problem. Since the tendency has been to focus on the supply side, we welcome the attention being devoted by the Forum to the demand side of human trafficking, particularly the issue of exploitative labour, as well as “sexual exploitation”.
14. Legalized prostitution contributes to the problem by supporting the demand for such trafficking, as affirmed in the 2006 report of the *Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*². Regrettably, there is also some tendency on the part of those who support legal prostitution to marginalize discussions on sexual exploitation altogether, so as to downplay the links between human trafficking and sexual exploitation. This must be vigorously opposed.

Incorporation of Gender- and Human Rights-Perspective

15. Second, we must mainstream a strong gender- and human-rights dimension in anti-trafficking discussions and strategies. Studies show that women and girls constitute around 80% of all trafficking victims and are subject to human rights violations. Furthermore, trends also point to a growing feminization of migration, which increases the vulnerability of women to trafficking.

¹ Most recently GA Resolution 61/144 [2006]

² E/CN.4/2006/2

Migration and Human Trafficking

16. Third, while there are links between migration and human trafficking, we should guard against the notion that migration *per se* results in human trafficking. Such an assumption could be used to curtail legitimate labour migration. Such a perspective detracts from the acknowledged positive side of labour migration as an engine of economic growth.

International Cooperation

Mr. CHAIRMAN,

17. The campaign to fight trafficking in persons requires strong, coordinated policies and enabling environments, both at the domestic and international levels.
18. Human trafficking is a transnational crime that calls for effective transnational responses. The success of anti-trafficking efforts depends on the cooperation of all countries.

CLOSING

MR. CHAIRMAN,

19. Strengthening partnerships within the bureaucracy, with civil society, the private sector as well as with the international community is indispensable in creating comprehensive intervention and prevention programme to address the menace of human trafficking. The Philippines intends to continue being an active and committed partner of the international community.
20. In this regard, the Philippines would like to take this opportunity to invite the delegates to this Forum to participate in the *Second Meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD 2)* which the Philippines will host from the 27th to 30th of October this year. The results of the Vienna Forum will certainly provide important inputs to the discussions at the Manila meeting.

Thank you.