



PHILIPPINES

STATEMENT

THE EXPERIENCES WITH A TRIPARTITE MECHANISM ENGAGING IN THE UNITED NATIONS AGENDA FOR PEACE

by

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and

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at the

CONFERENCE ON ADVANCING ^{COOPERATION} BETWEEN THE UNITED
NATIONS AND THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

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Madam Moderator, co-panelists
and distinguished participants,

Good afternoon. Let me be among the first to extend to you the
Christmas message of faith, hope, love and joy.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate the organizers of this one-day
conference on a very important topic: **Advancing Cooperation between
the United Nations and the World's Religions**; and to thank them for
inviting me to be one of the panelists to help explore how to strengthen the
mechanisms for such cooperation.

I will dwell on the topic assigned to me, namely: "**The Experiences
with a Tripartite Mechanism Engaging in the United Nations Agenda
for Peace.**"

The first of the three fundamental aims of the United Nations
solemnly enshrined in the Preamble of its Charter is "*to practice tolerance
and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors.*"

In the 63 years of the life of the United Nations, we have witnessed the establishment of subsidiary bodies dealing with a constellation of political, economic, social, environmental, legal and other issues. We have, in fact, a proliferation of these bodies, the need or effectiveness of some of which are under review in line with the UN system-wide coherence plan.

Regrettably, the United Nations has not yet created a mechanism primarily dedicated to enabling the peoples of the world to practice mutual respect, understanding and tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors.

To address this glaring lacuna in the work of the United Nations, the Philippines initiated in the 59th session of the General Assembly the introduction of resolution A/RES/59/23, entitled *Promotion of Interreligious Dialogue*, which was adopted by the General Assembly by consensus. The adoption was unprecedented and historic as it recognized for the first time the important and positive role that religions could contribute to the UN agenda item on Culture of Peace.

Then in the early part of 2005, the Philippines initiated consultations with like-minded Member States, UN agencies and religious NGOs to effectively pursue this initiative.

As a result of these consultations, a tripartite Core Group was formed. It was made up of: (1) sixteen Member States – Argentina, Bangladesh, Ecuador, The Gambia, Germany, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Philippines, Senegal, Spain, Thailand and Tunisia; (2) three UN bodies – UNESCO, the UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs (DESA) and the World Bank; and (3) the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN representing its 110 organizations.

The Philippines proposed to the tripartite Core Group the promotion of interfaith dialogue to help fill up this neglected area for international understanding and cooperation, based on its own endogenous success in fostering peace and preventing division and intolerance through interfaith dialogue as well as healing the wounds of internal conflicts which religious intolerance has been causing.

Thereafter, the tripartite Core Group held consultations which resulted in its decision to hold a conference of learned academicians, scholars and top thinkers from governments, the UN system and the religious sector on the relationship between interfaith or interreligious dialogue and the goals of the UN. The Core Group was one in the belief that attaining the goals of the United Nations is not the monopoly of any one sector and that the pursuit of peace through interfaith dialogue and cooperation is not at all an impossible dream. In fact, it is another effective means to attain the UN goals and its vision of peace.

On 22 June 2005, the **Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace** was held at the UN premises with the participation of (1) the top officials of the UN, namely: the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the President of ECOSOC, the President of the Security Council and the Director General of UNESCO, (2) an array of selected speakers from the tripartite sectors, (3) Governments, (4) UN bodies, agencies, funds and programmes; and (5) civil society organizations. The theme of the Conference was **Enhancing Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation Towards Peace in the Twenty-First Century.**

The proceedings of that Conference are documented in a book published by the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines. The book launching was made in September 2007, with the President of the Philippines as special guest. Some remaining copies of the book would now be made available to you.

The Conference put forward these four recommendations:

1. "The tripartite conference calls the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly in September 2005 to take into account the conclusions and recommendations of this conference. The High-Level Plenary Meeting in September 2005 should recognize that dialogues among civilizations, cultures and religions constitute vital contributions towards the promotion of a just and sustainable peace. The 2005 September Summit should call for an expansion and deepening of the relationship between the United Nations and civil society, including religious NGOs."

The 2005 World Summit dedicated paragraph 144 in its World Summit Outcome (Resolution A/RES/60/1) responding to this recommendation of the Conference.

2. "Member States of the United Nation, in partnership with the United Nations system and civil society, should undertake practical actions in the fields of education and the media to foster understanding, tolerance and cooperation between peoples of different religions and beliefs so as to overcome intolerance and combat stereotypes and misperceptions. Particular reference is made to the Program of Action under the Global Agenda for the Dialogue among Civilizations (2001)."

This call was heeded and continues to be heeded as reflected in subsequent interfaith resolutions of the UN General Assembly, in the program of work of the Alliance of Civilizations, in the annual meetings of the Asia-Europe Interfaith Dialogue Forum and Asia-Pacific Interfaith Dialogue for Harmony, and in the Work Program of the Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace.

3. "An open-ended tripartite consultative group composed of representatives from Member States, the United Nations system, and non-governmental organizations should be formed to follow up on the conclusions and recommendations of the Conference with an emphasis on practical actions. The open-ended tripartite consultative group should tap available resources and abilities, and develop ways and means to affirm the role of interreligious and intercultural cooperation in attaining a just and sustainable peace as the efforts to promote a Culture of Peace in the United Nations system, such as the efforts to promote Dialogue among Civilizations, the intercultural and interreligious work of UNESCO and the annual international day of peace on 21 September. The open-ended consultative group should also identify ways and means to address interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational issues and concerns, including the opportunity and mechanism for religious leaders to speak, interact and respond more clearly and quickly in times of violence, crises and conflicts."

This recommendation came to fruition with the launching of the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace (TFICP) in

New York on 24 March 2006. It now has 55 government partners, 15 UN agencies and bodies, and the 110 members of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN.

In a manner of speaking, this June Conference gave birth to the **Tripartite Forum.**

4. "The Secretary-General is invited to explore enhancing the implementation mechanisms and to follow up on the Declaration on a Culture of Peace and its Programme of Action, and the Global Agenda for the Dialogue among Civilizations of 2001 adopted by the General Assembly and other initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations."

The Secretary-General designated a focal point in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to coordinate UN system-wide coordination and cooperation with Member States on issues and matters dealing with interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace.

The **Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace (TFICP)** is one of its own kind, a class of its own, or in law, *sui generis*. Unlike others, it is employing an open-ended, if not informal, method of organization. It is mutually inclusive and mutually reinforcing of other related initiatives. Participation in its activities is on a voluntary basis. It does not require funding from its members. Yet, as I said on the occasion of its second anniversary of its founding, it is very rich because its wealth consists of values which money cannot buy, or which are beyond monetary quantification and which even money fears. These are values that never die – faith, hope and love.

The **TFICP** is just nearly three years old. Yet it has sponsored one successful conference after another, the first of which was the High-Level Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace in September 2006. Among the salient conclusions of this conference was the consensus that interfaith dialogue is no longer an option for the promotion of a just and sustainable peace, but a necessity. In light of the various crises we face today such as, and more particularly, terrorism, armed conflicts, religious extremism and intolerance, poverty and hunger, that necessity is beyond dispute.

The **TFICP** does not adopt a “big bang” strategy to accomplish the goals it set for itself as enshrined in its Terms of Reference. It opts to gradually cultivate a consensus on ways and means to accomplish its goals through a deliberative process, such as its frequent information sessions or exchanges, so that practical or pragmatic dynamic actions or measures taken would have a solid foundation for their implementation.

The **TFICP**'s most important contribution is its advisory services to Member States which have led to an incremental expansion of the scope and breadth of the substantive contents of the annual General Assembly resolutions on interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace. This advisory contribution led to (1) the merging in 2006 and yearly thereafter of the Philippine-initiated interreligious dialogue resolution with the Pakistani-initiated intercultural dialogue resolution, (2) the declaration of 2010 as the International Year for Rapprochement among Cultures, and (3) the emerging consensus for the declaration of the UN Decade for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace from 2011 to 2020.

In conclusion, the **TFICP** will strive to effectively serve as an important vehicle or mechanism to help carry out a vital strategy envisioned in the Charter of the United Nations in the pursuit of its mission “*to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors.*”

Finally, since I began with a Christmas greeting, let me end with a prayer for a New Year of peace, understanding, hope and love, through continuing interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

Thank you.