



# PHILIPPINES

**High-Level Meeting of the UN Alliance of Civilizations Group of Friends**  
**9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (EDT), via WebEx platform, Tuesday, 29 September 2020**  
Theme: *"Shaping a Better World: Building Cohesive and Inclusive Societies in a Challenging COVID-19 Environment"*

## PHILIPPINE STATEMENT

**H.E. MR. ENRIQUE A. MANALO**  
**Permanent Representative**

**Mr. High Representative, Excellencies,**

We are currently faced with an opportunity to unite or fall apart. Fear, uncertainty and inequality – elements that foster conflict – have heightened along with the rising numbers of COVID-19 deaths and infections. Unequivocally, the need to build trust and dialogue is most critical in these trying times. Never have the five pillars of UNAOC - education, media, migration, youth and women – been so relevant to promote tolerance and understanding, build solidarity and nurture peace.

The Philippines recognizes UNAOC's five pillars as providing the essential foundation for a just, peaceful and harmonious world, more so in the post-COVID-19 environment.

Women and gender equality play a pivotal role in sustaining peace and development. Thus, the inclusion of women in the priorities of the Alliance, more so in this difficult time, is auspicious. The Philippines has long recognized the critical participation of women in conflict prevention and mediation, and their effective leadership in achieving peace. For the Philippines, the impact of women in rebuilding and fostering peace is far-reaching. As early as the 1940s, even before the creation of the United Nations, Filipino nurses have served other countries and contributed to strengthening peace and international solidarity. The Philippines remains the top country of origin of nurses serving across the globe.

In the modern world, migrants have emerged as agents of peace and development in their countries of origin, transit and destination. In this invisible war that we wage against the pandemic, Filipinos and other migrants continue to be the bearers of peace, hope and healing. They, majority of whom are women, work the frontlines of essential services in the COVID-19 response and recovery, and are providing life-saving care to peoples all

over the world despite the fact that their migration status often does not afford them the same social protection as that of the citizens they serve.

In crises – be they economic, environmental, security or health-related – minority groups, including migrants, are often excluded, discriminated, or subjected to violence.

Thus, consistent with the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, and in accordance with the 2017 ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention (CoP) for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society, and other mechanisms, the Philippines supports and calls on other countries to join solidarity initiatives in the COVID-19 response and recovery, including addressing the digital divide and the pursuit of vaccines, therapeutics, treatment, and commodities, for the benefit of all.

### **Excellencies,**

The Philippines has actively advocated that once a cure for the virus has been found, this should be made a global public good. Addressing the pandemic is intimately connected to preventing conflict. As my foreign minister rightly said, “withholding the vaccine — the most effective means of mass salvation — is a weapon of mass destruction.”

Shared and open science illuminates the path towards peace, thus, the collaborative pursuits towards a vaccine led by the World Health Organisation (WHO) can ensure that together, we are able to develop and build capacity not just to overcome this pandemic but prevent conflicts.

Recognizing this link, Rodrigo Roa Duterte appointed the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process as lead of the National Task Force Against COVID-19 to ensure that Filipinos are protected not only from the armed clashes and conflicts, but more importantly, from the invisible disease with the aim to preserve the gains of the peace process and work towards economic and sustainable peace in the country.

### **Excellencies,**

As Member States of the UNAOC’s Group of Friends, we represent an ideal, an identity, and a theme that aspires for a world at peace through mutual respect, tolerance, moderation and, where those were lacking, reconciliation as a first step towards them.

Let us offer new ways of forming and sustaining solidarity across cultural backgrounds, faith traditions, political systems and geographic borders, and celebrate creative collective initiatives that strengthen and make communities more inclusive such as those that transcend language barriers - nature, music and the arts - salve to our weary souls.

In the Philippines, schools use blended learning methods, operating virtually through a combination of media and tools to ensure that children, especially the most vulnerable, are able to continue with their education.

Movement restriction policies have moved most interactions and transactions online, including personal connections. Relationships with family and friends are maintained through social media platforms and video conferencing applications.

In the meantime, information, factual or otherwise, is moving in lightning speed through all forms of media, especially social media platforms, influencing the minds and behavior of people, especially the youth, and, in a grander perspective, the pandemic response and recovery. This new normal brings with it unsavory realities, such cyber-bullying and forms of online sexual exploitation, which harm mental health and define the lives of our children, our young people, and our communities.

Thus, we urge the Alliance of Civilizations to work to address the digital divide and help improve the access, infrastructure and capacities in developing countries to adopt to this new normal. Sharing best practices and capacity-building and financing are urgently needed.

### **Excellencies,**

The Philippines, together with Pakistan, sponsor the annual UNGA resolution “Promotion of interreligious and Intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace,” which has been adopted by consensus by the Assembly since 2004. The resolution offers a platform to further promote, strengthen mechanisms and take the appropriate actions towards sincere and constructive dialogue across cultural and religious divides to achieve peace and stability and the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To be more coherent and effective, we recommend that the Alliance build synergies with other international and regional organizations working across the five pillars, such as UNESCO, UN Women, IOM, ILO, and ASEAN.

The Philippines stands in solidarity with our United Nations as a partner in its work at the national, regional and multilateral levels to embrace and nurture a culture of peace, a community of partnerships and a commitment to achieve more inclusive and prosperous societies post-COVID-19.

Thank you. **END**