

## PHILIPPINE STATEMENT

9<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on CTTC,  
29-31 May 2011, JW Marriot Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Co-Chairs and fellow delegates,

At the outset, allow me to thank, on behalf of the Philippines, Malaysia and Japan for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements for the 9<sup>th</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ARF ISM-CTTC) in Kuala Lumpur.

The ARF has made significant headway in enhancing cooperation in combating terrorism and transnational crimes in the Asia-Pacific region. Numerous activities have been held to provide opportunities for information sharing and coordination, capacity building, and sharing of best practices among ARF participants.

In this regard, the Philippines views the adoption of the Ha Noi Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement at the 17<sup>th</sup> ARF on July 2010 in Ha Noi as a monumental step in bolstering the current efforts of ARF in combating terrorism and transnational crime. The Plan of Action provides the policy guidance for the ARF in developing and implementing concrete and practical actions, in

line with the different priority areas, including counter-terrorism and transnational crime.

The Philippines also welcomes the recent entry into force of the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism, which provides the legal framework for cooperation among ASEAN Member States in combating terrorism.

The Philippines has been supporting and contributing to regional efforts to address these non-traditional security threats through national initiatives that are founded on a comprehensive approach. This approach, comprising political, economic, diplomatic, military and legal means, takes into account the human rights aspect of combating these threats to ensure that human rights principles are upheld and respected in the conduct of various activities.

In addition, the Philippines has taken an active role in pursuing interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the national, regional and international levels. This is in recognition of the significance of promoting tolerance, respect, understanding and conciliation among peoples of different faiths and cultures in addressing root causes of terrorism or addressing conditions

conducive to terrorism, such as extreme poverty, social injustice and discrimination in various forms.

As you may know, the Philippine domestic terrorist threat currently emanates from the Abu Sayyaf Group or the ASG and other radical elements based in Southern Philippines. These groups and other radical personalities and the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) have developed linkages that were mutually beneficial to their respective agenda.

Nevertheless, at present, the ASG is believed to have limited capability to conduct major operations outside of its domain or sphere of influence due to the decimation of its leaders, rank-and-file and proxies, and dwindling funds. However, the ASG still has the network and support group that can be tasked to stage operations in the islands of Basilan and in Sulu. It is estimated that ASG still has around 400 members, with almost the same number of firearms.

In addition, the ASG still maintains linkages with rogue elements of the Moro National liberation Front (MNLF) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and radical groups and individuals loosely affiliated with the JI, who were monitored arriving

intermittently in Southern Philippines by exploiting our porous borders. This situation continues to pose a significant threat to the country, especially in Southern Philippines.

We are also closely monitoring developments on the JI organization and other radical groups in other countries in the region as these have a direct impact on our domestic terrorist threat.

In this light, the importance of cross border cooperation is underscored. While there has been marked progress over the last decade in regional information-sharing, there is much room for improvement. It is becoming more critical for all those involved in counter-terrorism activities to understand the dynamics beyond their own borders to understand how the various groups link up and how the connections established may thrive in the future.

Aside from terrorism, the Philippines is also significantly affected by illicit drug trafficking, human trafficking or trafficking in persons (TIP), and maritime piracy. These transnational crimes have victimized a number of Filipinos and have put pressure on our government. Further, we have taken notice of the increasing threat of cybercrimes, in view of the exponential growth in the use of the

internet and other modes of ICT at the global level. The Philippines is also cognizant of the possible nexus between terrorism and these transnational crimes. These concerns again highlight the importance of broadening regional cooperation in order for us to advance our respective national interests.

As such, the Philippines looks forward to increased regional cooperation under the ARF framework to further bolster efforts to combat terrorism and other transnational crimes.

Thank you.