



In Pursuit of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World

by Alberto G. Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines

When the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) announced that it had conducted a nuclear test on 25 May 2009, the message that humanity remains under the threat of mass destruction resonated across the globe.

The DPRK’s second test in three years was an unsettling reminder of the complex challenges to the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and to the norms of nuclear non-proliferation that the global community is building in pursuit of world peace. It underscored the importance of a comprehensive and permanent ban on nuclear testing in the infrastructure of a global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Shared goals, collective efforts

The 180 States that have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), nearly 150 of which have deposited their instruments of ratification, have affirmed their collective belief in the Treaty as a critical instrument in nuclear weapons control and disarmament. This near-universal support for the Treaty will assume a more transforming significance with its entry into force upon the signature and ratification by the remaining nine Annex 2 States, which includes the DPRK.

Voluntary testing moratoria are simply not enough. These moratoria need to be enshrined into permanent and legally-binding commitments that give a clear message that the world does not accept the acquisition or development of nuclear weapons. This requires nuclear weapon States to take more decisive steps towards disarmament.

As confidence-building measures pave the path to our common security, the entire international community is being challenged to enshrine this principle in the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference.

Much is expected from this conference. The Philippines, as the elected President of the 2010 Review Conference, shares the desire of nations to move forward in the process and counts on the support, counsel, and cooperation of all States Parties to the NPT.

The Philippines senses a prevailing climate of good faith from States Parties to the NPT that will enable the achievement of a good measure of progress for the

Leaders of the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore founded the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967 on the basis of a shared political outlook in response to the security environment in East Asia at that time. Having grown since then to ten member states and a cumulative population of 600 million, ASEAN has assumed a distinct political identity in the Asia-Pacific region.

In the last four decades, the ASEAN process has forged and strengthened the commitment of ASEAN members to build peace and security in the region and beyond.

The Treaty on the South East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ), which was opened for signature in 1995 and entered into force in 1997, embodies the determination of ASEAN to contribute towards complete nuclear disarmament.

The five-year SEANWFZ Plan of Action was adopted during the Philippines’ chairmanship of ASEAN in 2007. This Plan of Action acknowledges the importance of ASEAN member states and ASEAN dialogue partners’ accession to international instruments such as the CTBT.

The Philippine Chairmanship of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) during the same year also advocated strong support in the Asia-Pacific region for the CTBT as an essential element in non-proliferation.

The ARF promotes security in the Asia-Pacific through dialogue and cooperation between and among its participants namely, Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China,

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2010 Review Conference. This is a welcome development since animating the process of negotiations on key substantive and procedural issues will require the commitment of all States Parties to ensure a productive, forward-looking outcome.

Working for nuclear non-proliferation in the region and beyond

The Philippines’ desire to contribute to building a safer global community finds its most vital expression in its diplomacy in the region.



DPRK, European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russian Federation, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, United States and Vietnam.

In April 2009, the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Council held its inaugural meeting in Thailand. The APSC, which exemplifies ASEAN's move towards enhanced political collaboration, subscribes to a comprehensive approach to security. It renounces aggression and the threat or use of force in the settlement of disputes and upholds ASEAN political instruments such as the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) and the SEANWFZ Treaty.

Although still in its nascent stages, the APSC Council mechanism holds the key to the further evolution of ASEAN. In the coming years it is expected to consistently pursue ASEAN's abiding role in enhancing regional security through dialogue and cooperation and its vision for a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Beyond its efforts as an ASEAN member, the Philippines cooperated with the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in 2007 to organize a regional workshop to promote universal support for the CTBT. Fifty-five representatives from 17 countries attended the CTBTO Workshop on International Cooperation for States of Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Far East held in Manila in June 2007.

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Hence the active promotion of the CTBT and the NPT is always included in the agenda of regional and international inter-parliamentary fora such as the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum and the International Parliamentary Union.

The biennial Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, also known as the Article XIV conference, manifests at the highest political level, the commitment of State Signatories to the CTBT and their support for the work of the CTBTO. This year's conference in New York from 24 to 25 September 2009 takes place amidst an optimistic atmosphere greatly encouraged by the commitment of the United States to ratify the Treaty and the recent understanding between the U.S. and Russia on arms reduction and control.

The CTBTO has achieved much progress in its task of establishing the monitoring and verification system in preparation for the Treaty's entry into force. The CTBTO's response to the DPRK's nuclear test in May 2009 highlighted the improved capabilities of the International Monitoring System (IMS) and the International Data Centre (IDC). The CTBTO's work requires unwavering focus and determination to ensure a competent degree of readiness of the IMS, IDC and the On-site Inspection regime upon the Treaty's entry into force.

The Road Ahead

This momentum in the political environment and the steady gains in the development of

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the verification system demand more than ever the active and full support of all of the CTBT's Member States.

There are key challenges ahead, but every step taken by Member States in the spirit of building confidence, improving mutual trust and broadening consensus in the global agenda on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, takes us closer to our goal of seeing the Treaty's timely fruition and ultimately, a more peaceful and secure world. ■

Biographical note



Dr. Alberto G. Romulo has been the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines since August 2004. He was Executive Secretary of the Office of the President

from 2001 to 2004 and also served as the Secretary of the Department of Finance. Prior to this, Dr. Romulo was a member of the Philippine Senate from 1987 to 1998, during which time he served as Majority Leader for five years. ■