

UNHCR Ministerial Meeting
Geneva, 7-8 December 2011 *AM*
Statement of Hon. Secretary Ronaldo Llamas
Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs
Delegation of the Philippines

Mr. President,

- The Philippine Delegation is one with the international community in congratulating UNHCR in this year's commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, the 50th anniversary of the *1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*.
- The Philippines is proud to have contributed to the protection of refugees and displaced persons throughout its history. In the first half of the 20th Century, we welcomed refugees from the wars and persecutions ravaging Europe. In the last quarter of the Century my country had also assisted many thousands of refugees fleeing the conflicts in Indochina. Now, in the new millennium we continue this tradition by hosting a UNHCR Emergency Transit Mechanism, which was established in the Philippines in 2009.
- The Philippines also marks this year as the 30th anniversary of its accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and celebrates the ratification in May this year of the *1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*. We take pride in being only one of two Southeast Asian countries to be contracting parties to the Refugee Convention, and the only nation in the region to have acceded to the Stateless Persons Convention.
- The Philippines stands with UN Member States and the humanitarian community to uphold the Conventions and to support the work of the UNHCR. We encourage fellow Member States to unite and share in this commitment during and beyond the Meeting. The Philippines places great importance on the need to consider options to further strengthen and develop the international protection regime in the light of new challenges confronting us all today.
- Conflict, climate change, natural disasters, and migration continue to complicate the global humanitarian response for the protection of the vulnerable. The prevailing situation compels all countries and the UNHCR to collaborate more closely to alleviate the seemingly endless toll of human suffering.
- As UNHCR pursues its protection mandate, we wish to thank the UNHCR for its support of the Philippine national government's response to internal displacement caused by conflict and natural disasters. The support has ensured that humanitarian space and protection for the displaced would always be maintained. In this regard, we take this opportunity to inform the international community that legislation is on its way to enhance the protection of the rights of internally displaced persons. The Philippine Armed Forces has also incorporated IDP protection principles in its Internal Peace and Security Plan, in consonance with President Benigno Aquino III's multi-stakeholder approach to peace, security, and the protection of civil rights and liberties.
- Philippine foreign policy also continues to emphasize the advancement of the rights and welfare of over 10 million Filipinos living and working outside the Philippines. The Philippines welcomes the call of the High Commissioner to ensure that third country nationals in light of recent events in the Middle East are able to access humanitarian corridors at all times, and that the rights of foreigners – refugees and migrants alike – are fully and properly protected from harm. We would like to express our profound

appreciation for the UNHCR-IOM Joint Evacuation Cell (JEC) which complemented and assisted our own efforts in providing emergency assistance to our nationals in North Africa earlier this year.

- Building on previous years initiatives and progress, the Philippine government and UNHCR have continued to work together in 2011 in strengthening the legal and policy framework for asylum and statelessness in the Philippines. In light of this, the following pledges are made:

Pledge 1: The Philippine government, with support and in cooperation with UNHCR, will continue to develop the policy and operational framework to address statelessness after the ratification of the 1954 Convention and to strengthen implementation of the 1951 Convention.

Pledge 2: The Philippines will issue machine readable travel documents to refugees and stateless persons in accordance with its existing law

- The Philippines' recent ratification of the *1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, makes it the first country in Southeast Asia to become a party to the Convention. Intra-governmental discussions and capacity-building programs have begun to lay the groundwork for policy and operational frameworks that can deal with statelessness.

Pledge 3: Continuing efforts initiated in 2011, the Philippines will study statelessness in the Philippines and among its nationals that are at risk of statelessness outside the Philippines

Pledge 4: The Philippines has initiated the process for the accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

- The Philippines remains an active partner of the UNHCR aims to engage in regional process that could respond to complex population and refugee movements in the Asian region.

Pledge 5: The Philippines will continue leadership in ASEAN in the development of a human rights framework dealing with issues relating to migrants, trafficked persons, refugees and stateless persons

- UNHCR **consistently** proves its leadership in coordinating international protection for refugees, asylum seekers, the displaced, and the stateless, ensuring that the human rights of the vulnerable are protected and promoted, and seeking lasting solutions to their plight. Let us all continue to support the UNHCR and pledge to do even more for the cause of the most vulnerable of our fellow men.

Pledge 6: In support of UNHCR programmes, the Philippines is pleased to announce an increase in its contribution for 2012 to USD 100,000.

Thank you, Mr. President