

# **PRESS RELEASE** (PS037-AGR-06)

## ***Cebu Dialogue on Regional Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, Development and Human Dignity***

14 – 16 March 2006, Shangri-La Mactan Island Resort, Cebu

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### **BUILDING THE MOMENTUM FOR PEACE**

Welcome remarks of the  
**Honorable DR. ALBERTO G. ROMULO**  
Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines  
at the Opening Ceremonies of the  
Cebu Dialogue on Regional Interfaith Cooperation  
For Peace, Development and Human Dignity  
14 March 2006

Her Excellency Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines,  
The Right Honourable Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand,  
Honorable Andrew Robb, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multi-  
Cultural Activities of Australia,  
Honorable Mangasi Sihombing, Director General of the Department of Foreign Affairs of  
Indonesia  
Honorable Gwendolyn Garcia, Governor of Cebu,  
Honorable Tomas Osmeña, Mayor of Cebu City,  
Honorable Arturo Radaza, Mayor of Lapu-Lapu City,  
Colleagues in Government,  
Excellencies, members of the diplomatic corps,  
Distinguished participants of the Cebu Interfaith Dialogue,

It is my honor and my privilege to welcome you to the Cebu Dialogue on Regional Interfaith  
Cooperation For Peace, Development and Human Dignity.

I welcome you on behalf of the Filipino people and the countries that co-chair this dialogue:  
Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand.

Together, we stand united in turning back the tide of terror, by building greater understanding  
and tolerance through interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

Through fear and violence, terrorists have sought to divide nations and peoples.

By subverting religion, terrorists and extremists have tried to drive deep wedges between  
those of different faiths.

They will fail.

The world stands united, even stronger, in the face of terror.

We remain firm in our resolution and commitment to fight terrorism in all its forms.

We move forward, unafraid and unwavering, determined not to allow terrorism and extremism  
to distort and bend the teachings and beliefs of different religions.

Our combined momentum in building greater understanding and upholding human dignity has  
made the world smaller for terrorists and extremists – they are finding fewer places to hide and fewer  
hearts willing accept their vile objectives.

Two years ago, in Yogyakarta, we engaged all faiths and religious groups in Southeast Asia to develop an inclusive conceptual approach to bridging differences and find specific common grounds for practical cooperation.

Last year, we also articulated our fervent desire to build interfaith harmony in the international community in the Bali Declaration of the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue.

Last year, we pushed for the further promotion of interfaith dialogue at the inaugural Asia-Middle East Dialogue.

Beyond our region, this momentum has become unstoppable.

During the World Summit at the United Nations last September, the first-ever Interfaith Summit was held, chaired by Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

The United Nations Security Council Summit chaired by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo last September adopted Resolution No. 1624 which sought to continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations.

The firm consensus behind interfaith dialogue is enshrined in the General Assembly's different resolutions, including the Philippine-initiated "Promotion of Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace."

Here in Cebu, we shall draw lessons, register further commitments and map out next steps that will provide comprehensive and longer-term approaches to effectively address the root causes of centuries-old divisiveness and animosity.

We shall extensively discuss in the four workshop sessions interfaith cooperation for regional peace and security; the role of education in promoting interfaith cooperation; human dignity, development and interfaith cooperation; and, the role of media in promoting interfaith cooperation.

I am certain that, at the end of this forum, our ideals will be embodied clearly and convincingly in a document, which I propose be called the "Cebu Declaration."

Let the Cebu Declaration add to the momentum that is pushing forward the frontiers of peace and understanding and in vanquishing fear and terror.

Beyond Cebu, I urge all our stakeholders to continue seizing the opportunities available for further propelling the impetus for interfaith dialogue.

I therefore would like to invite all the Cebu Dialogue participants to the Tripartite Forum for Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, Development and Human Dignity to be formally launched on March 24 at the United Nations in New York.

The tripartite forum galvanizes UN agencies, governments and non-government organizations in a unique partnership that seeks to create practical measures for further realizing the interfaith dialogue objectives.

As we move forward our shared aspirations for a more peaceful community of nations grounded on respect for humanity's full diversity, we look forward to a sustained engagement with all the stakeholders and proponents of peace.

With our united efforts and unceasing commitment to building peace, we will succeed.

Thank you, and good morning. END