

29 January 2010 - Philippine efforts on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including its Presidency of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference this year, are expected to benefit Filipinos, including those residing and working overseas.

"The Philippines took on this laborious and most difficult of tasks because it is in our national interest to strive for a world free from the threat of these devastating and inhumane weapons. There is not a single corner in this small world of ours where you will not find a Filipino who could be adversely affected with the use of nuclear weapons," Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo said.

There are more than eight million Filipinos overseas, including in vulnerable areas where nuclear weapons can be found, such as the United States, Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Middle East.

Secretary Romulo said that as the number of countries, as well as non-state actors, developing and possessing nuclear weapons continues to increase, the Philippine Presidency of the Review Conference will endeavour to find ways to achieve global disarmament.

"It is our responsibility in Government to protect our people, wherever they may be, and ensure that they feel secure. While we do not possess nuclear weapons, the number of countries that do continue to increase. With millions of Filipinos abroad especially in the Middle East, we will strive to protect them from harm arising from a nuclear incident, the only way to do this is to curtail the spread of and totally eliminate nuclear weapons," Secretary Romulo told members of the media.

The Philippines will assume the Presidency of the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in May this year.

An essential cornerstone in the global pursuit of nuclear disarmament, and which the Philippines has long advocated for, the Treaty was designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to further the goal of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament, and to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

"The Philippines hopes to contribute to finding solutions to global problems such as nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as this will in turn provide better security for our people," Secretary Romulo said.

The NPT entered into force in 1970 and was extended indefinitely in 1995. It calls for a review to be held every five years to assess the operation and implementation of the Treaty.

To sit as President-elect in this year's Review Conference to be held from May 3 to 28 at the United Nations headquarters in New York is Philippine Ambassador Libran N. Cabactulan, a career diplomat with vast experience as a negotiator.

He will be supported by a team of experts, advisers and young diplomats.

"The Philippines has a pool of highly competent Foreign Service officers knowledgeable on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. They are the best and the brightest diplomats that this country has to offer. The men and women in the Service will assist President-elect of the Review Conference, Ambassador Libran N. Cabactulan as he seeks to build consensus among the 189 States Parties to the NPT," Secretary Romulo added.

The Philippines views success in this year's Review Conference as crucial to enhancing the effectiveness of the Treaty and its implementation.

It is for this reason that the Philippines is hosting a Workshop on the NPT, the aim of which is to bring together as many stakeholders together prior to the Review Conference to encourage in-depth discussions on the many challenges and issues facing the NPT regime and possibly find the solutions to these problems.

The Philippines is hosting the Workshop with the cooperation of the Austrian and Norwegian Governments, both key partners in the fight against nuclear weapons.

"The prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their complete and total elimination among the weapons stockpiles of countries is as important or even more than the issue of climate change and will be a continuing process. The Philippines hopes that the 2010 Review Conference will be regarded as the meeting that contributed and led the world on its way to one that is free from the threat of nuclear weapons. The Filipino people and the peoples of the world deserve no less," Secretary Romulo said. END