

20 March 2013 – Expressing “grave concern” over the recent abduction and detention of 21 Filipino peacekeepers from the United Nations Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights, the Philippines urged the United Nations (UN) Security Council to “exert all efforts” in order to ensure the safety and security of all peacekeepers.

In his letter to the Security Council, Philippine Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Libran N. Cabactulan called on the Security Council to exert all efforts and use its influence on all parties to the conflict in Syria to “ensure the freedom of movement and the safety and security of all UNDOF personnel consistent with obligations and commitments under the international law, to undertake efforts to ensure that similar incidents are avoided in the future, and to cooperate with UNDOF in its operations to ensure that the Mission is able to fulfill its mandate.”

Ambassador Cabactulan also called on the Security Council to “ensure that a mechanism is in place that guarantees open, active, and transparent dialogue between Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) and the Security Council” in the event similar incidents involving peacekeepers occur.

In a statement, Ambassador Cabactulan said that coordination and dialogue between the Security Council and TCCs are of “utmost importance” given the stakes involved in peacekeeping operations, particularly in the Golan Heights.

“The Security Council plays a key role in peacekeeping operations. It sets forth the mandate which a peacekeeping mission is sworn to uphold and observe. The members of the Council also wield considerable influence over the parties in the region. Our communication to the Security Council is meant to highlight this vital role of the Security Council and for the need for open, active and transparent dialogue,” the Ambassador said.

“We are hopeful that this call of the Philippines – redounding as it does to the benefit of all troop contributing countries and to the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions - will be received positively and acted on by the Security Council,” explained Ambassador Cabactulan. “We are ready to work with other stakeholders to pursue this initiative,” he added

The Philippines has more than 300 troops in the Golan Heights as members of the UNDOF. Austria, Croatia and India are the other TCCs to UNDOF. END