The Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines comes before you at a time when human rights promotion and protection in our country is at a crossroads.

A culture of impunity continues and human rights are challenged on the ground by:

- the "relentless war against illegal drugs" that has resulted in thousands of deaths largely victimizing the poor,
- The extension of Martial Law in Mindanao and an active armed conflict that has caused internal displacements,
- the pursuit of a legislative agenda that reintroduces the death penalty and lowers the minimum age of criminal responsibility,
- the discovery of a secret detention cell and its denial by State agents,
- public threats, intimidation and false information against human rights defenders, journalists and oversight actors,
- the vote in the House of Representatives to reduce the Commission's budget, along with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the Energy Regulatory Board, to 20 US Dollars, which was recently restored but with a possible 15 per cent reduction in the total budget proposal.

We reiterate our call to take government to task and restate the recommendations of various States during the interactive dialogue of this third cycle of the UPR:

- End impunity and adhere to the rule of law and due process in the campaign against criminality,
- Ensure accountability, transparency and cooperation in investigations of human rights violations especially extra judicial killings, torture and enforced disappearances,
- Prosecute all perpetrators be they civilian or members of law enforcement,
- Honor its human rights obligations particularly the ICCPR and the Second Optional Protocol Aiming at the Abolition of the Death Penalty, Convention on the Rights of the Child and pass, among critical human rights legislations, a comprehensive anti-discrimination bill,
• Address and eliminate discrimination and violations against at-risk groups including women, children, LGBTI persons, persons with diverse SOGIE, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, migrant workers and members of their families, internally displaced persons, and whistleblowers and witnesses of crimes and atrocities.

• Enable national and international oversight mechanisms to perform their mandates, and

• Respect the Commission and other Human Rights watchdogs, such as the Supreme Court and the Office of the Ombudsman, as they perform their respective constitutional mandates.

The Commission stands undaunted in this difficult time, empowered by the solidarity of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF), human rights defenders, civil society, and ordinary citizens. We continue to perform our duty in accordance with the 1987 Philippine Constitution and the Paris Principles.

Despite a disabling, exclusionary environment, (including the exclusion in the national UPR processes and the formulation of the National Human Rights Action Plan) and reticence in the investigation of persisting human rights violations the Commission on Human Rights remains steadfast in its commitment to promote and protect human rights, even as it continues to engage government to uphold the sanctity of life, the dignity of every person, and the essence of human rights.

Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! Maraming Salamat Po.

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