

PHILIPPINE STATEMENT
DURING THE ICI ANNUAL REVIEW CONFERENCE

Scandic Infra City Hotel, Upplands Vasby, Stockholm

29 May 2008

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Iraq and the United Nations for inviting the Philippines to participate in the Annual Review Conference on the International Compact with Iraq (ICI). The Philippine government is certainly honored to join the rest of the international community in the effort to review the progress in the implementation of the covenant signed last year in Egypt between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations and to push forward our collective vision for Iraq.

I also wish to congratulate the Government of Sweden for its able hosting of this conference, which has brought all of us here together in the spirit of partnership and cooperation, and in support of the goals of peace and development for the government and people of Iraq. It is worth noting that in our pursuit of these particular objectives, we also promote our shared values and interests, in terms of freedom and democracy, peace, security and development.

Indeed, in this increasingly globalized and interdependent world, our nations' destinies have become so inextricably linked that governments must come together and consolidate our energies and resources in order to effectively address common challenges and opportunities. This is a reality that we must all recognize and embrace.

I am glad that in the efforts to promote the economic self-sufficiency of Iraq, as well as its integration into the regional and global economy, it is evident that a strong partnership and cooperation exists between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations, and partner institutions such as the World Bank, the International Fund (IMF) and other regional financial institutions.

I therefore take this occasion to recognize and reaffirm the importance of the role played by the Government of Iraq, the United Nations and partner institutions in the establishment and implementation of the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) initiative.

Today, almost a year since its establishment, we gather once more to review the progress in the implementation of the respective commitments of the Government of Iraq and the international community under the Plan, and to discuss further steps that need to be taken to help Iraq on its path towards peace, sound governance and economic reconstruction. We hope to be aided in this task by the Iraq Compact Annual Review Report.

The Philippines would, however, like to note at this point, the progress made in the implementation of the international partnership's Comprehensive Programme of Reform and Investment for Iraq, as indicated in the 2007 Mid-Year Progress Report and the Joint Update on the ICI dated 22 September 2007. We note the achievements in the different areas of collaboration despite the challenges in the security, political and socio-economic environment.

In the politico-security arena, it is remarkable to note the 80% reduction in violence in Iraq and the steady progress in the efforts to strengthen the Iraqi Security Forces, which have now assumed security control of nine Iraqi provinces. The Philippines believes that the establishment and operationalization of the National Reconciliation Programme, the passage of the Independent Electoral Commission Law and the establishment of the Commission to administer election-related matters would facilitate efforts to foster national unity, peace and reconciliation in Iraq.

The passage of the Accountability and Justice Law, which allows ex-officials of the Baath party to return to public life, as well as the efforts of the Constitutional Review Committee to address concerns regarding the original text of Iraq's constitution and to set the stage for a robust union, would likewise speed up the national reconciliation process.

With the passage of the Amnesty Law, the Provincial Powers Law and the US\$48 billion budget for Iraq, it is hoped that violent power struggles among the concerned parties would now cease and the implementation of much needed legislation would be facilitated and strengthened.

We hope that the Iraqi Government will continue to pursue measures that will strengthen the spirit of cooperation and harmony among the Iraqi people and encourage the development of a strong and institutionalized pluralistic society.

In the economic sector, the Philippines welcomes the submission of the drafts of the Oil and Gas Law, Investment Law, the Liberalization of Fuel Importation Law, the Revenue Sharing Law to the Iraqi Parliament, for its consideration, as well as the development of a successor to the Development Fund for Iraq.

We recognize the efforts that have been made to improve budget planning and execution, institute fiscal federalism and strengthen the fight against corruption through the establishment of the Joint Anti-Corruption Council.

We note the importance of the civil service census that was undertaken to help eliminate abuse in government systems and to set the baseline for comprehensive civil service reform, as well as the Government of Iraq's

investment of one trillion dinars in 2007 in the Public Distribution System as a means of providing a social safety net to over 1.5 million low income families and over 1 million unemployed people.

We also note other countries' support for Iraq through debt relief.

The Philippines hopes that these achievements would be sustained, and that the needed improvements in other sectors as outlined in the ICI plan would be effectively pursued in partnership with the identified agencies and international supporters.

In line with efforts to promote Iraq's reintegration into the global economy and politics, the Philippine government is now studying the possibility of reopening its embassy in Baghdad in the near future. A scholarship training program for Middle East and African diplomats is also being readied for implementation next year.

In closing, allow me to reiterate the firm commitment of the Philippine government to support the Government and People of Iraq in realizing its national vision of a united, democratic and prosperous country.

Thank you.