

Human Rights Council – 44th session

Enhanced Interactive Dialogue with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the
situation of human rights in the Philippines

30 June 2020

Australian Statement

Australia thanks the High Commissioner for Human Rights for her report on the situation of human rights in the Philippines and welcomes engagement by the Government of the Philippines with the Office of the High Commissioner during the preparation of the report, including high-level engagement today through Justice Secretary Guevarra.

Australia also welcomes the High Commissioner's recognition of the Philippine Government's efforts to improve the protection of economic and social rights. Australia acknowledges these efforts and notes the benefits in addressing systemic challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, by 'leaving no-one behind' with respect for human rights.

Australia shares the High Commissioner's concerns of reports of extra-judicial killings and other serious human rights violations in the Philippines, including those affecting journalists, human rights defenders, those accused of using narcotics, lawyers and trade unionists, for which domestic mechanisms should ensure greater accountability.

Today's announcement by Justice Secretary Guevarra of a new mechanism is a very welcome development in this respect.

Australia notes that the Philippines faces a significant threat from terrorists and will continue to work with the Philippines to ensure that its counter-terrorism legislation provides an appropriate framework for responding to this threat, consistent with its international obligations, including those relating to human rights.

Australia welcomes the recommendations in the report with regard to cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms and the provision of technical assistance. We encourage the Philippines to continue engagement with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We remain committed to supporting and assisting the Philippines in this regard, as it works to implement its international human rights obligations.

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