

Representatives from more than 105 countries participated in the Special Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting (SNAMMM) on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace and Development held in the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) Manila from 16-18 March 2010.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)**

The NAM is the largest and most important political caucus and bloc exclusive to developing nations in the UN system comprising 118 member states, 15 observer countries and 8 observer organizations. It operates on the notion that the consolidated strength of the developing countries through close cooperation, may serve as an effective counterbalance to the inordinately weighty economic and political influence of the powerful countries. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is an international organization conceived from the Asia-Africa Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. As stated in the Havana Declaration of 1979, the organization's purpose is to ensure "the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries" in their "struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, Zionism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics."

The Philippines was accepted as a NAM member at the 10th NAM Summit in Jakarta in 1992. Despite prior exclusion due to its 'special relationship' with the US, the Philippines has always recognized the validity of NAM's principles and objectives.

## **NEWS: NAM member countries adopt Manila declaration**

### **NAM MEMBER COUNTRIES ADOPT MANILA DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT**

18 March 2010 – After two days of sharing best practices and stressing the need to start the process of dialogue among faiths, cultures and civilizations worldwide, member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) adopted the Manila Declaration and Programme of Action on interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace and development.

The SNAMMM seeks to address the existing, new and emerging challenges to the promotion of a culture of peace and development. It also aims to reaffirm that the common fundamental values contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility are essential to international relations.

"We now have a landmark Manila Declaration that identifies and reaffirms the importance of key principles crucial in the achievement of peace and development through interfaith dialogue. The Manila Declaration covers the full breadth and depth of the human aspiration for peace and is anchored on the core values we hold dear – mutual understanding, respect and tolerance," Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo said.

Secretary Romulo added that the SNAMMM outcome document also recognizes the valuable roles that key stakeholders play in utilizing and maximizing interfaith dialogue as a tool for peace and development. These include civil society and religious groups, the media, the academe, women and the youth.

Divided in two parts, the nine-page Manila Declaration contains the principles that will guide NAM states in the promotion of interfaith dialogue and cooperation, and more importantly, concrete actions on its implementation.

Under the Manila Declaration, NAM member countries reaffirm that "dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions should be a durable process and that, in the current international environment, it is not an option but an imperative, sound and productive tool to promote economic and social development, peace and security, and human rights and the rule of law in guaranteeing a better life for all."

They further reaffirm that "tolerance is a fundamental value of international relations."

NAM states also adopted a Programme of Action on the active promotion of dialogue, in particular, interfaith dialogue, to strengthen a culture of peace and development. Countries agreed to undertake the following measures, among others:

- Call on governments to promote and respect the freedom of religion and belief in ways that will encourage interfaith dialogue;
- Recommend seeking the assistance of religious and spiritual leaders of standing in resolving intercommunal conflicts and tensions when and where applicable;
- Recommend the development of mechanisms by which the role of women in interfaith activity can be further recognized, including through the establishment of women's interfaith fora and by providing training and support;
- Recommend strengthening multi-religious youth networks across regions, encouraging cooperation, including through exchange programs, camps and training programs;
- Encourage the development and incorporation of "interfaith studies for peace and development" in school curricula, the establishment of centers for interfaith studies in universities where appropriate, and regional and international networking among these centers;
- Encourage the initiative made by Lebanon to establish in Beirut an international center for the dialogue among civilizations and cultures;
- Encourage the establishment of educators-training programs centered on teaching the importance of tolerance and respect for cultural and religious diversity;
- Promote touristic destinations and activities that aim to increase awareness of and better appreciation of other cultures and religions;
- Promote interfaith dialogue at the grassroots level to serve as an instrument of promoting sustainable livelihoods and community cohesiveness or unity;
- Encourage faith-based non-governmental organizations and civil society to support the efforts of governments as well as to develop partnerships among each other, in order to cooperate for social and economic justice, for all within the society;
- Endorse further exchanges between people (e.g. youth, students, teachers, religious leaders, academics) of different faiths, within and between countries, and at the grassroots communal levels;
- Encourage media programs and initiatives that allow for better understanding of other cultures and religions, including training programmes for media practitioners to be sensitive on these matters;
- Draw on the positive experiences of peaceful coexistence and cooperation of multiethnic and multi-religious communities and encourage those experiences to help diffuse tensions and build confidence in conflict situations;
- Incorporate dialogue among religions and between religions and the State as appropriate into national plans and strategies on different themes, including sustainable development, in order to ensure that followers of all religions equally benefit from economic development and progress;
- Initiate discussions with a view to elaborating an international instrument on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance, including ways to eliminate defamation of religions and prophets, and discrimination based on religion or belief;
- Contribute to the implementation of the Tehran Declaration and Programme of Action on Human Rights

and Cultural Diversity and the Manila Declaration.

"We are confident that the Manila Declaration will guide us in the realization of our objectives and in addressing these challenges. It will also strengthen our common endeavors in pursuit of a secure and stable world that lives by the values of cooperation to serve the common good advocated by all religions," Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem, Permanent Representative of Sudan to the United Nations, said.

"The Manila Declaration contains important initiatives to be stressed like the need to promote in children and youth an education based on tolerance and respect for cultural and religious diversity, promotion through media initiatives for understanding of cultures and the establishment of interfaith studies centers at universities, among others. In this regard, the participation of civil society and the media is critical to the dialogue," Ambassador Gonzalo Gutierrez of Peru said.

The Ministers and other Heads of Delegation attending the SNAMMM also encouraged NAM member countries to share information on the development of the Programme of Action of the Manila Declaration in their respective countries at NAM's relevant meetings.

WEBSITE: <http://www.snammm.org.ph/>