

**Mrs. Natividad** (Philippines):

I wish to congratulate the new members of the Security Council and to thank Sweden for organizing during its presidency this open debate on conflict prevention and sustaining peace. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for sharing his views on this topic this morning and for reminding us that conflict prevention and sustaining peace must be a priority for each one of us.

The promise of the Charter of the United Nations to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war continues to challenge us after 71 years. The tools and mechanisms at the disposal of Member States and the Security Council, particularly those outlined in Chapters VI and VII of the Charter, could better deliver on that promise, if they were fully utilized at an earlier stage, if they were used to encourage inclusivity, participation and ownership among all stakeholders in a conflict and if there were coupled with economic and social development, which would help to sustain peace.

For the Philippines, a country that has witnessed armed conflicts that have spanned many generations, the work to attain a just and lasting peace continues. In 2014, after 40 years of conflict, the Philippines signed a peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The implementation of that agreement is now the focus of our work in order to ensure that the peace we have is durable. At the same time, peace talks have resumed with the Communist Party of the Philippines, and peace negotiators are preparing for the third round of talks later in January. The Philippines' decades-long quest for peace, especially in Mindanao, has taught us many valuable lessons on conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

Today the Government of the Philippines is embarking upon a new template for peace, with the support and assistance of our international partners. It is one where the dividends of peace are being planted while a peace agreement is still being negotiated. There is greater incentive to pursue and maintain peace when parties to a conflict see the need to safeguard the seeds of economic and social opportunities that are growing in their communities. It is a template that is anchored in greater inclusivity and ownership by all stakeholders — not only among warring factions, but also among all those affected by the conflict, who have an equal stake and interest in its resolution. Allow me to share some important elements of this new peace template.

First, our peace negotiators no longer need to wait for formal peace agreements to be signed before embarking upon projects for stakeholders so that they can experience and enjoy the dividends of peace. Development projects can be implemented alongside peace negotiations. The envisioned Mindanao trust fund, which the United Nations Development Programme has been invited to support, is anchored in that belief.

Secondly, aside from formal peace tables, we have instituted the Peoples' Peace Tables, which are open to all stakeholders who are directly involved in conflict, as well as those who are on the sidelines but are affected just the same — women, indigenous peoples, youth, local Government, civil society, traditional and folk leaders, religious leaders, as well as representatives of business and other sectors. The Peoples' Peace Tables allow for broader participation by people, the building of relationships, the strengthening of institutions, and healing and reconciliation.

Thirdly, economic empowerment remains key to conflict prevention. Fragile communities must benefit from socioeconomic development programmes, which can reduce their vulnerabilities and increase their capacity to address conflict.

The national experience of the Philippines in building and sustaining peace is anchored in three complementary strategic pillars, some of which have been pointed out by previous speakers. The first pillar has to do with policy reform and governance, which addresses issues of injustice relative to land security, natural resources, identity and human rights. The second pillar has to do with capacity-building that strengthens Government institutions and empowers communities. The third pillar has to do with peace-promoting socioeconomic interventions.

In conclusion, those pillars can easily be applied to the work of the United Nations in addressing peace and security challenges. Our peacebuilding and peacekeeping initiatives should promote economic development at all stages of the peace process, uphold inclusivity through dialogue, and strengthen policies and governance, all while working with local Governments and institutions in the spirit of cooperation. Peace can be achieved and sustained if it is founded on the aspirations and labour of the people who seek it.