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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Liberal International (World Liberal Union), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 May 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Deterioration of the state of democracy and rule of law in the Republic of the Philippines

Liberal International (LI) welcomes and fully aligns with the statement released by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Ms. Agnes Callamard, and the Special Rapporteur appointed by the UN Human Rights Council to help States, and others, to promote and protect the right to the highest attainable standard of health, Mr. Dainius Pūras, which urged the Philippines to stop unlawful killings of people suspected of drug-related offences.

This statement would like to pay particular attention to the above-mentioned extrajudicial killings of thousands of citizens of the Philippines which are on-going and the abuse of state institutions in order to harass all those who oppose this horrendous government policy. The right to life is the most important human right and it is the most important duty of each government to protect this right.

Recognizing that:

-Since President Rodrigo Duterte took office, allegedly more than 7,000 drug-suspects have been killed, 1/3 of which by police forces and 2/3 by vigilantes

-According to a *2017 Amnesty International investigative report*, the Philippines National Police has been reported to forge or often even plant evidence in order to justify the unlawful killings of drug suspects

-According to the *latest report from Human Rights Watch* on the situation in the Philippines, the so-called anti-drug campaign dubbed “Operation Double Barrel” has targeted “suspected drug dealers and users ostensibly for arrest but in practice has been a campaign of extrajudicial execution in impoverished areas of Manila and other urban areas”

-President Duterte has publicly endorsed the campaign declaring that he does not have any respect or regard for human rights or international law which implicates him and other senior officials in possible incitement to violence, instigation of murder, and crimes against humanity

-Senator Leila de Lima from the Liberal Party of the Philippines (LI full-member) is the staunchest critic of the government’s policy of extra-judicial killings and was the first to spearhead various investigations on the growing extrajudicial killings in the country, including calling on world leaders and the International Criminal Court (ICC) to launch a criminal investigation to stop the Philippine government’s war on drugs. Further, she has been a subject of sexist political attacks because of her previous work against the then-Davao City mayor in her capacity as Chair of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR)

-As a result of Senator De Lima’s investigation, allies of President Duterte in the Senate voted to remove her as chairperson of the Senate committee on justice and human rights and subsequently arrested her on dubious drug charges

-The Vice-President of the Philippines, Leni Robredo, has become a frequent target of politically motivated harassment and intimidation following her criticism of human rights abuses committed in the country in connection with the president’s war against illegal drugs

-The extra-judicial war on drugs instigated by President Duterte is in fact war on the poor as an *Amnesty International’s investigative report* has revealed that the Philippine police systematically targets mostly poor and defenceless people across the country while planting “evidence”, recruiting paid killers, stealing from the people they kill and fabricating official incident reports under the pretence that such people are drug user or sellers

Stressing on the fact that:

- There have been multiple attempts to silence the political opposition as evidenced by the arrest of Senator Leila de Lima, whose detention relied solely upon conflicting testimonies of criminals who were subsequently absolved of drug charges after they agreed to serve as witnesses for the prosecution on questionable drug charges
- As an elected public official Senator de Lima has the right to continue her duties in the Philippine Senate as part of the political opposition free from persecution
- Vice-President Robredo faces fresh calls for impeachment, and the case of the Supreme Court sitting as Presidential Election Tribunal, to proceed with the electoral protest filed by her defeated opponent for the vice-presidency could be a possible retaliation against her vocal criticism of the government's anti-drug policy
- After having postponed the local elections for one year, President Duterte is determined to cancel these elections, amend the law and appoint roughly 42,000 local officials himself which will enable his extra-judicial war on drugs
- The current government tolerates, if not encourages, bullying and harassment of vocal critics against the targeted practice of extra-judicial killings of drug suspects, including of representatives of the civil society and media
- Liberal International has been a target of massive orchestrated attacks online in the aftermath of its vocal defence of the work of Senator De Lima and Vice President Robredo

Expressing grave concern that:

- The death toll resulting from the government's war on drugs continues to escalate, hidden from the media, and therefore the public, with critics of the anti-drug campaign callously being silenced
- On the instructions of the President, the reinstatement of the capital punishment and the lowering of the age of criminal liability from 15 up to 9 years old has become a legislative priority in the Congress of the Philippines, reflecting a perverted sense of justice
- As per an investigation of the Philippines Human Rights Commission suspected drug dealers are detained in a "secret jail" in Manila, which is a clear violation of the constitution
- The government's disregard of human rights and the rule of law presents itself as a grave challenge to the democratic discourse of the country

Liberal International recalls:

- Its statement calling for the immediate release of Senator De Lima and condemning the disrespect for human rights and the rule of law in the country issued on 23 February 2017
- The resolution of the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats, LI cooperating organisation, **expressing alarm about the "creeping authoritarianism" in the Philippines as a consequence of its continuing war on drugs adopted on 25 February 2017**

Liberal International commits:

-For its liberal human rights parliamentarians, member parties and Human Rights Committee to continue to support the independent media, the liberal opposition in the country and all those who openly criticize President Duterte's extra-judicial killings of drug suspects and work towards the restoration of justice and accountability in the Philippines

Liberal International calls:

-On President Duterte to comply with his duty to protect the lives and the rights of the citizens of the Philippines

-On President Duterte to direct the Philippine National Police to immediately end their campaign of extrajudicial executions and to fulfil their Constitutional obligations to protect the lives of *all citizens*

-On the Philippines judiciary to conduct an immediate, thorough and an impartial review of the charges against Senator de Lima, and a speedy and impartial conduct of her trial, should it proceed, as enshrined in the Philippine Constitution

-On the United Nations to remain vigilant on the case of Senator De Lima and condemn the continuing violations of fundamental human rights and the rule of law in the Philippines

-On President Duterte and his government to lift a series of preconditions it has imposed on the planned visit of the UN Special Rapporteur for extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Ms. Agnes Callamard, as these go against the established Special Rapporteur Code of Conduct and Terms of Reference for country visits, and grant her immediate access to the Philippines so that she can investigate the alleged extra-judicial killings of suspected drug dealers

-On the United Nations Human Rights Council to set up an independent international commission of inquiry into the alleged extra-judicial killings in the country in order to determine responsibility and ensure mechanisms for accountability
