

# GMA at UN: RP can't do it alone

By PAOLO ROMERO

President Arroyo sought yesterday closer international cooperation in addressing the global economic slowdown, saying the Philippines and other developing economies "cannot do it alone."

In a speech before the 63rd General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, Mrs. Arroyo warned the "developing world is at a tipping point" and that is the Philippines.

"We feel the pain of high prices of food, fuel and rice,"

"It hasn't been easy but Filipinos are tough and resilient. We have pulled together," Mrs. Arroyo said.

"We have been able to draw on additional revenues to provide targeted investments in food and fuel to keep our poor afloat until a better day," she added.

"But we are also realistic

that we cannot do it alone. We need a strong UN as never before. We need rigorous international cooperation as never before," she said.

She said the financial turmoil "has moved like a tsunami around the globe, wiping away gains, erasing progress, not just here in Manhattan Island, but also in the many islands of the Philippines."

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"Just when we thought the worst had passed, the light at the end of the tunnel became an oncoming train hurtling forward with new shocks to the global financial system," she said.

"The setbacks from these global shocks of the past year, and the past weeks, are real and profound," Mrs. Arroyo said. "It will take time and perseverance to put the pieces back together," she pointed out.

"There are hundreds of millions of good people across this

globe who are struggling as never before. We must hear their cry for help. It is within the collective power of the leaders at this UN Assembly to fulfill the universal dream of better education, better health, food on the table and a dignified life," she said.

She cited UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his timely agenda on helping the poor cope with global developments.

"He deserves our highest praise for his quick and deci-

sive action on the global food crisis," she said.

"His comprehensive framework for action involving the UN, donor countries, civil society and the private sector seeks to achieve food security through the right combination of policies, technologies and investments. This is a model of the United Nations in action," Mrs. Arroyo said.

To address the global challenges, nations must strengthen links with allies, "to bring rice to where it is needed to feed the people; investments to create jobs, and keep the peace

and stability in the world."

Mrs. Arroyo said the Philippines has been implementing a self-reliance tack through the use of "a targeted strategy with a precise set of prescriptions to meet our price challenges" such as subsidizing, local self-sufficiency and greater energy independence.

"This is a positive example we wish to share with the rest of the world," she said.

The country's economic growth in the last seven years has been hard-earned, she said, citing tough and painful decisions made to "reset our economy" in-

cluding tax increases, banking reforms, crackdown on smuggling, and tough fiscal discipline.

"Thankfully, these reforms have given us some running room to weather the first wave of global price shocks that reverberated across the world earlier this year," Mrs. Arroyo said.

As soon as global economic volatility became apparent

many months ago, the Philippines moved at once to increase and stabilize the supply of rice as well as deliver targeted subsidies to the poor, she said.

The country has also reached out to its neighbors like Vietnam and others in the region and elsewhere, to ensure a stable supply and affordable prices, she said.

"We have increased our energy independence by 17 percent through greater use of geothermal, hydro and other renewable sources. We expect to attain 60 percent energy independence in two years," the President said.

Mrs. Arroyo also proposed that countries pursue their bio-fuels program without harming food security by planting non-food biofuel sources on land unusable for food production purposes.

### Dialogues for peace

Mrs. Arroyo also cited the need for pursuing dialogues with rebel groups and affected communities.

"We will release the peace talks from one that is centered on dialogue with rebels to one of authentic dialogue with the

communities," she said.

"The content of our engagement with all armed groups shall subscribe to the UN-recognized principle of demobilization, disarmament and re-integration," she added.

Mrs. Arroyo also voiced her "high hopes" in interfaith dialogue "as means to build bridges rather than barriers between communities of different cultures and ethnicity."

"In a continuation of this effort, the Philippines will host the first ever special Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue for Cooperation and Development in May next year," she said.

Meanwhile, Press Secretary Jesus Durazo said Mrs. Arroyo met with heads of state of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, Andorra, Serbia, San Marino and Panama, and with the foreign minister of Russia.

He said Mrs. Arroyo urged the leaders to participate in the Second Global Forum on Migration and Development and in the Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation in the Philippines in October and May next year.