***Draft Press Release on the Philippines Delegation to the 42nd Session of the UNHRC and the Iceland Summit***

**Philippines NGOs Address the Human Rights Crisis in the Philippines**

**in Geneva and Iceland**

Human rights violations under the repressive 3-year old Duterte administration in the Philippines are escalating at an alarming rate. As of March 2019 some 29 000 people have been killed in the regime’s ruthless crackdown on alleged drug users and traffickers, while145 human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and critics have been assassinated.

Against this background of fear and repression, on July 11 2019 the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) passed a resolution tabled by Iceland at its 41st session calling on the Government of the Philippines to take all necessary measures to prevent extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, to carry out impartial investigations and to hold perpetrators accountable in accordance with international norms and standards. The resolution also called on the Philippine government to cooperate with the Human Rights Council in facilitating visits to the country to investigate reported human rights violations there and tasked the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, to prepare a comprehensive report on the human rights situation in the Philippines for presentation to the body’s 44th session. The Duterte government has so far refused to allow UN representatives into the country or to cooperate in any way with UN bodies.

**Philippines NGOs seeking justice at the 42nd UN Human Rights Council Session**

A delegation composed of 11 human rights defenders, church leaders and relatives of the victims of the war on drugs is now in Geneva to attend the 42nd session of the UNHRC. They will be providing testimonies for inclusion in Michelle Bachelet’s report on the human rights situation in the Philippines and giving oral interventions on the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and of the UN Assistant Secretary General. They will also conduct a number of side events and meet with diplomatic missions, international rights groups and the Filipino migrant community in Geneva.

Among the delegation is Marissa Lazaro, whose 20-year old son was killed by police in 2017 in the drug war, mistaken for a robber and drug suspect. “I am here to seek justice for my son”, she stated and continued “What happened to my son is the norm under Duterte's brutal leadership and repeated denial by authorities will not dissuade me from speaking the truth.”

The members of the delegation will be highlighting specific cases of victims of the Government war on drugs and of attacks on human rights defenders such as the case of Atty. Ben Ramos, who was gunned down in Negros in November 2018. As a human rights lawyer Ramos had worked for many years to defend the rights to land of the small and landless peasants and their organizations in his area.

**Building on the UNCHR Resolution: Filipino Civil Society Groups to hold an Emergency Summit in Iceland**

The Iceland-initiated UNHRC resolution was warmly welcomed by Philippines civil society organisations and the families of victims of the drug war as a clear signal of concern on the part of the international community. As a follow up to the resolution and as an expression of their gratitude for Iceland’s gesture of solidarity, a number of civil society organizations will be holding an Emergency Summit Meeting on the human rights crisis in the Philippines in the Icelandic capital Reykjavik on September 21. The delegation attending the 42nd session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva will participate at the Emergency Summit along with politicians and civil society representatives from Iceland and abroad.

Participants at the Reykjavik Summit intend to gather support for the UNHRC resolution and discuss possible ways to exert diplomatic, economic or political pressure on the Duterte administration to put an end to the killings, end impunity and bring the perpetrators of human rights violations to justice.