

EU – Philippines buffet dinner on the occasion of the signature of the PHIL – EU PCA

Introductory remarks Head of EU Delegation

Thursday, 12 July 2012

Acting Foreign Secretary del Rosario, Under Secretary Ayson from the department of Energy, (Under Secretary Salazar) from the department of Justice,

Dear colleagues,

Distinguished guests,

"Patience is the greatest of all virtues." (Cato the Elder)

Yesterday His Excellency Foreign Secretary Albert Del Rosario and the European Union High Representative Catherine Ashton signed the long awaited EU-Philippines Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) on the occasion of the Asia Regional Forum in Phnom Penh. As you all know, the PCA was initialled already in 2010, was then signed by all the Foreign Ministers of the 27 member States of the European Union and I am very pleased that we could take this final step and sign this landmark agreement.

High Representative Ashton stated at the signing ceremony yesterday that "With the Philippines, Europe has a relationship going far back in history. We share common beliefs, such as on human rights and on democracy." " This agreement allows us to address the challenges in a coherent and methodical way – through both dialogue and real cooperation."

Indeed, the PCA will be a new and comprehensive framework that will take our bilateral relationship to a new level of intensity. For the past 30 years Philippines-EU relations were governed by the Cooperation Agreement between what was then called the European Economic Community and ASEAN. As bilateral links between the Philippines and the EU have considerably evolved since then and are ever deepening, it was felt by both sides that this needs to be reflected by an appropriate instrument.

And so, for the first time in a long history of friendship, the Philippines and the European Union are linked through a bilateral agreement that covers all aspects of our multi-faceted relations. Through strengthened dialogue and cooperation, we will work together in a wide range of areas, such as political aspects, including peace process and conflict prevention, human rights, trade and investment and regional and global security issues like non-proliferation. Collaboration will also include justice and security, migration and issues such as development cooperation, disaster risk management, energy, environment, tourism and education.

The signature of this agreement needs to be put in the current context of EU relations with Asia in general and with the Philippines in particular. Although some might consider that the European Union is only preoccupied by addressing the debt crisis affecting some of its members States, the reality is that the EU has been very active in developing its relations with Asia this year. In May, High Representative Ashton attended the EU-ASEAN Foreign Minister meeting in Brunei. This week, High Representative Ashton is attending the ASEAN Regional Forum, where security issues of the region are discussed and the EU signed a treaty of amity and cooperation with ASEAN. In November of this year, European leaders will meet their counterparts from Asia in Vientiane, Laos.

Regarding EU-Philippines relations, we can note the holding six months ago of the 7th Senior Officials Meeting, then, Vice President Binay met with European Council President Van Rompuy and European Commission President Barroso in Seoul in margin of the nuclear security summit. There, they agreed that the two European Presidents will have a meeting with President Aquino in the margin of the ASEM summit in November in Vientiane. You might also remember that President Aquino visited one EU member States this year: the United Kingdom in early June, and Vice President Binay visited France last week.

One month ago, the European Union up-dated its guideline on the EU' Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia.

As you can see the EU is actively reinforcing its relations with Asia and the Philippines.

The newly signed PCA will now undergo ratification procedures in the European Parliament and all EU Member States National Parliament. For the Philippines, the enforcement of the agreement to my understanding will be signed by the President before it will enter into force. In the meantime, the EU and the Philippines will jointly identify priority issues under the PCA and discuss how to move forward together.

As you know, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement is not a Free Trade Agreement, but it is a pre-requisite for signing a Free Trade Agreement. The Philippines signalled readiness to begin a scoping exercise, or pre-negotiation talks, for an FTA earlier this year. Currently, the European Commission is in contact with the Philippine Government to explore the possibility for launching the pre-negotiation talks. Given that the EU is the Philippines' 5th largest trading

partner and second largest source of foreign exchange remittances, there are certainly merits in an FTA for both the Philippines and the European Union.

Finally I would like praise the hard work of all the people who negotiated this agreement both from the EU side and the Philippines side. On the EU side, I would like to thank Mr. Jim Moran who was the head of the negotiating team as well as my predecessor Mr. Alistair MacDonald and all colleagues from the delegation who are with us this evening. On the Philippines side I would like to thank the Chief negotiator DFA Under Secretary Edsel Custodio and Ambassador Manalo who is now in London, as well as all the DFA team that worked on this project.

Thank you.