

**Message by EU Ambassador Guy Ledoux**  
**Launch of the Justice Zone**  
**Quezon City Hall, 28 November 2014**

Chief Justice Sereno, Secretary de Lima, Secretary Roxas, Mayor Bautista, EU Heads of Mission, other distinguished guests, colleagues from the press, friends, good morning to all of you.

It is a great and particular pleasure for me to join you today on the occasion of the launch of the justice zone. It is so for two reasons.

Firstly, I believe that the innovative concept of the justice zone which will be explained to us in more details later on represents a unique opportunity like no one ever before. If reforms of the justice system have been undertaken over the last two decades, it is indeed fair to say that the results have fallen short of expectations. Practitioners and scholars alike explain this matter of fact on two principal accounts.

On the one hand, it is argued that previous reforms have largely been piece-meal, scattered, and isolated throughout the justice system. The latter is however an interconnected whole which is more than the sum of its parts. It can only properly function when all its constituting elements are interplaying harmoniously and

complementarily. A defective part will result in a failure of the overall course of action.

Transforming the justice system therefore requires getting away from unilateral measures by its different stakeholders towards coherent and integrated reforms spanning the whole sector.

On the other hand, it is put forward that reforms in the past have not been strategically conceptualised and put into effect with adequate implementation plan. It is stressed that these measures have been lacking a long-term vision and tackling symptoms more than imbedded deficiencies. It is also contended that if they did aim at addressing the root causes of the problems, they ultimately failed to do so for lack of proper implementation. Most intended reforms, it is posited, were not planned over the short, medium, and long term with binding milestones, appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and adequate expenditure frameworks.

Transforming the justice system indeed requires carrying out genuine problem analysis and not shying away from reality as well as performing genuine needs assessment and be accountable for change.

This first reason why I am particularly happy to witness this launch is thus that these two shortcomings of the past are precisely addressed

in the concept of the justice zone developed in the framework of the Justice Sector Coordination Council.

Created in 2010, this body, one has to admit, remained dormant until 2012 and only got traction upon the appointment of the Honourable Chief Justice Sereno. It is under her leadership that together with the Honourables Secretary de Lima and Secretary Roxas, the JSCC has been transformed from a rather ineffective information-sharing mechanism to a trailblazing policy-making body. Credits must be given to these three leaders as in the first time of the history of the Filipino justice system, the main stakeholders in the two branches of the Government of the Executive and Judiciary are sitting together rolling up their sleeves on planning genuine sector-wide reforms.

Besides its sector-wide approach, the concept of the justice zones is inscribed in a long term vision of a well-performing justice system in which everyone play its part to the fullest. It is also backed by a well thought through implementation plan which leaves no room for excuses for failure to or delays in execution. The sector-wide coordination – or rather collaboration – is already by itself a guarantee that implementation will follow suit. It carries with it the benefits of mutual understanding for the difficulties faced by each partner and the peer pressure to address them for not letting each other down.

The second reason why I am particularly glad and honoured to be given the privilege to address you at this event is that the European Union is able to support this initiative of the justice zone. Through our ongoing EU-Philippines Justice Support Programme (otherwise known as EPJUST II), we are very well positioned to assist in this endeavour as this action which started in the beginning of 2013 is, not coincidentally, based on the same premises.

Aligned on the priorities defined in the Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016 and focussing on the issues of access to justice and impunity, EPJUST II is first and foremost sector-wide. It is based on the assumption as I have just mentioned that real impact will only be achieved through joint endeavours. Implemented by the Department of the Interior and Local Government, it includes the Department of Justice and the Supreme Court, their attached agencies, as well as the Commission on Human Rights and non-state actors. Its natural steering body is thus the Justice Sector Coordinating Council itself whose efforts it is best placed to support.

Furthermore, unlike traditional development cooperation programme mainly aimed at capacity-building, EPJUST is resolutely reform-oriented. It aims at contributing to the Government development and planning of an agenda of measures that

fundamentally change what needs to be changed rather than try to fix what cannot be fixed. In a low middle-income country like the Philippines which has important resources at its disposal, our role as partner is not so much to fund training or other capacity development activities but to share experiences and best practices that could be appropriate in our respective context. Our added-value is the support to the conceptualisation of innovative reforms by our partners rather than in their implementation which can be ensured by the Government. The European Union with a wealth of experience from 28 different justice systems is a very relevant partner for that.

Finally, EPJUST II is equally based on a third premise of the justice zone which is actually its essence, namely the need to pilot test these measures as a comprehensive package in restricted geographic areas. Rather than a scattered implementation of different reforms nationwide, a critical mass of measures should be undertaken in a few selected zones to ensure maximum impact before rolling them out nationwide. This method is also mindful of limited financial resources and has the potential to trigger the necessary investments for replication in other areas based on the demonstration of concrete results in the pilot zone. Following this approach, EPJUST concentrates in a few selected areas and Quezon City, thanks to the interest and good will of its Mayor, is naturally one of them.

As you may notice, I am thus very much enthused by the initiative of the justice zone and the support the EU is able to provide thereto as I believe in its strong potential. It shall demonstrate that genuine reforms of the justice system are feasible at reasonable costs by far outweighed by benefits.

Although not immediately visible, the contribution of efficient and effective justice systems to economic and social development are well documented nowadays.

As a single market and area of freedom, security and justice which relies on the confidence of citizens, businesses and national authorities in the legal systems of all other Member States, it is a matter of great concern for the European Union. Last year, as a response to the financial crisis, the EU has for instance developed a Justice Scoreboard as a tool to assess and improve the efficiency, quality and independence of its justice systems.

As much as it is needed for the EU, the Philippines must strengthen its justice system to further sustain its economic growth, alleviate poverty, and protect human rights.

I therefore wish to once more praise Chief Justice Sereno, Secretary de Lima, and Secretary Roxas as well as Mayor Bautista for this

initiative of the justice zone and I wish all of us a lot of success in our respective and joint endeavours.

Maraming salamat po!