



EUROPEAN UNION
Delegation of the European Union to
the Philippines

5 May 2016

The Delegation of the European Union to the Philippines
marks its 25 years in the Philippines on 5 May

The Delegation of the European Union to the Philippines is celebrating its silver year in the country. Traditionally held on 9 May, the Delegation has decided to shift the celebrations to 5 May because of the upcoming elections.

EU Ambassador Franz Jessen together with his Foreign Affairs counterpart and Vice-Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador Christian Anthony Vihruri of the Embassy of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, will lead the official celebrations to mark the historic occasion in a reception held tonight at the Dusit Hotel, Makati City.

The EU-Philippines relations have witnessed many positive developments

While the then Delegation of the European Commission to the Philippines was inaugurated by no less than President Corazon Aquino and then European Commissioner Abel Matutes in May 1991, development co-operation support has been provided to the Philippines since 1976.

Grant assistance mainly in the areas of rural development, health, and environment has been channelled through both governmental and non-governmental organisations and geographically spread over all parts of the country. Numerous NGO-managed projects under the Commission's thematic budget lines were also focused on specific areas such as drugs, STD/HIV/AIDS, human rights and democracy, displaced peoples, women's microcredit, and tropical forest protection.

Throughout the years, development cooperation programmes in the Philippines have also increased substantially.

Combining the EU's and the EU Member States' assistance, the EU grants reached € 533 million from 2012 to 2014, the EU is focusing on two priority sectors: inclusive growth through access to sustainable energy and job creation and the strengthening of the rule of law through judicial and legal reforms.

The EU will sustain its role in the peace process and will continue to support peace interlocutors in the country. Over the years the European Union has adapted its funding programs to the changing needs of the Peace Process.

The EU remains one the biggest foreign development partners to provide support to Mindanao and the Peace Process through a comprehensive approach supporting directly the political settlement with the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) and supporting longer term development mainly through the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI).

Last December 2015, the European Union Delegation to the Philippines launched a new programme in support of the peace process and is providing € 5.5 m (Php 275 million) to allow for a smooth transition and to create conditions for the establishment of the autonomous region of the Bangsamoro and the election of its government.

The programme contributes to peace building and conflict mitigation, support the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro and strengthen local institutions and political processes. The grants are being channelled through Conciliation Resources; NGOs such as the Non Violent Peace Forces, Fondation Suisse de Deminage, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung; United Nations Development Programme and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

The EU also supports development in Mindanao through the Mindanao Trust Fund Reconstruction and Development Programme which is focused on assisting the socio-economic recovery of conflict-affected areas in Mindanao.

The EU is the biggest contributor to the trust fund together with Sweden providing almost 70% of the total amount of the trust fund (Php 1.23 Billion). The fund is scheduled to run until the end of 2016.

Other Milestones

From only 12 member-states, the EU now has 28 members with its population increasing from 375 to 500 million while the Philippine population of 63 million has now zoomed to 100 million this year.

Coupled with the population growth are the remarkable progress in the trade aspects.

The EU-Philippines' trade worth €2.5 billion in 1990 has now increased to almost €13 billion in 2015 and has evolved the EU from being the stronger import partner to a stronger export partner of the Philippines and now the largest foreign investor in the country.

A positive boost to the relationship is the granting by the EU of a Generalised System of Preference (GSP+) status to the Philippines which allows for a significant reduction of customs tariffs on Filipino export products.

Owing to the GSP+ along with other other factors, the EU remained the 3rd largest exporting partner of the Philippines.

Before the end of this month, the Philippines and the EU will also engage in their first round of negotiations for a bilateral free trade agreement.

Both sides share an ambition to conclude an agreement covering a broad range of issues, including the elimination of customs duties and other barriers to trade, services and investment, investment protection as well as access to public procurement markets. Once concluded, the FTA will constitute another achievement in the EU-Philippines relations.

On the political front, the signing of Philippines and the EU of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement on July 2012 was a landmark agreement to cite.

This agreement, covering political, security, economic and social affairs, still needs to be ratified by all concerned parties, but once it has entered into force, it will constitute a firm basis for enhanced cooperation in areas like trade, development cooperation, research and innovation and political issues.

People-to-people links were also strengthened during the 25 years. President Aquino visited the EU in 2014 while former High Representative Ashton was in Manila two years ago as did Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs Georgieva who went to Tacloban to assess the EU assistance after Typhoon Haiyan. The new High Representative, Mogherini, has met her Filipino counterparts last year, not to forget of course, are the numerous other contacts between officials from the Philippines and the EU Member States in the recent years.

Among the major achievements in the relationship was the lifting of the air ban for major Philippines air carriers. This development has witnessed the resumption of direct flights from the Philippines to Europe with Europe now standing as one of the largest tourism markets in the country.

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The EU Delegation thanks its partners for the milestones attained and hopes to maintain and establish stronger partnerships

Throughout the 25 years, the EU Delegation wishes to acknowledge the help and support of its partners from government, non-government and civil society organisations, media, academe and business sector.

Philstar.com is the official online media partner of the EU Delegation to the Philippines in its celebration of its 25 years in the country.