



JOINT PRESS STATEMENT ON THE 8TH EU-PH SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING

11 June 2013, Brussels

1. The 8th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) between the European Union (EU) and the Philippines took place on 11 June 2013 in Brussels. Managing Director for Asia and the Pacific of the European External Action Service (EEAS) Mr. Viorel Isticioaia Budura and Philippine Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Evan P. Garcia co-chaired the meeting attended by officials and experts of both sides.
2. Both sides acknowledged the positive developments in EU-Philippine relations since the last SOM in December 2011 and reaffirmed their commitment to reinforce bilateral cooperation on a broad range of issues.
3. They welcomed the signing of the EU-Philippine Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) by EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Catherine Ashton and Philippine Secretary for Foreign Affairs Albert F. Del Rosario in Phnom Penh in July 2012 and looked forward to its early ratification by both sides. They agreed that the PCA will serve as a general framework for enhancing bilateral relations.
4. They highlighted the marked increase since the last SOM in reciprocal high level visits from leaders of the Philippines and the European Union and its member states as well as the new impetus to bilateral relations provided by the EU-Philippine leaders meeting between Philippine President Benigno Aquino III, President of the European Council Herman van Rompuy and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso at the 9th ASEM Summit at Vientiane in November 2012.
5. Dialogue on the progress in bilateral relations was conducted with the view to enhancing mutually beneficial cooperation in such areas as trade and investment, development cooperation, human rights, air and maritime transport, the Mindanao Peace Process, the preservation of marine biodiversity, energy and disaster risk reduction and management.
6. The signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro was hailed by both sides as a crucial milestone in the Mindanao Peace Process that paves the way for a final enduring peace in Mindanao. The Philippines informed the EU that the Government of the Philippines and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) are working to complete the Annexes, as well as to put in place the different mechanisms as identified in the Framework Agreement. The EU welcomed continuation of these positive developments and reiterated its commitment to support the process both politically and through development assistance.
7. The Philippines and the EU reaffirmed their shared interest in and commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law and agreed to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in this area. In this respect, both sides welcomed the signing of the Financial Agreement of the EPJUST II Programme "Justice for All: Enhancing Accessibility, Fighting Impunity", building on the previous achievements.
8. The EU and the Philippines welcomed the lifting of the significant safety concerns by the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) recognizing that progress had been achieved

by the Philippines in the area of air safety and looked forward to the prospect of Philippine air carriers being able to start direct flights to the EU. The Philippine side also updated the EU on developments in its efforts to strengthen its maritime administration and training system of seafarers so as to comply with the requirements of the STCW Convention.

9. Both sides exchanged views on general political and economic developments in the Philippines and the EU as well as on important regional and multilateral issues. The EU informed the Philippines about measures taken to address economic and financial situation and about upcoming EU enlargement.
10. The EU and the Philippines also discussed developments in the Asia Pacific regional security architecture. They welcomed the accession of the EU to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and discussed the momentum of ASEAN integration following the 22nd ASEAN Summit held in Brunei in April 2013. The Philippines welcomed the EU's intention to further enhance its engagement with Asia and expressed its support for EU membership of the East Asia Summit. Discussions were also held on the West Philippine Sea / South China Sea issues and both sides agreed on the importance of resolving disputes through peaceful and collaborative means in accordance with international law such as UNCLOS.
11. The EU and the Philippines welcomed the inauguration of the Southeast Asia Permanent Secretariat of the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Centre of Excellence in March 2013 in Manila as an important and practical expression of their mutual interest in a peaceful and stable Asia Pacific region.
12. The working groups on Trade and Investment and on Development Cooperation met separately on 10 June 2013 and reported the results of their respective meetings to the SOM. The Working Group on Trade and Investment exchanged views on multilateral and regional trade and investment issues including WTO/DDA, key trade developments in the EU and ASEAN, including respective FTA developments and integration in ASEAN and EU-ASEAN regional trade relations. Discussions also focused on the state of play of bilateral trade and investment relations, trade and market access issues, IPR enforcement, customs modernization, competition policy and procurement policy. The Group also discussed economic cooperation activities under the EU's Trade-Related Technical Assistance programme.
13. The Working Group on Development Cooperation discussed the current state of play and critical concerns relative to the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2011-2016 and its ongoing review. The EU set out its development policy reform as defined in its "Agenda for Change" strategy which, similarly to the Philippine Development Plan, focuses on inclusive growth and good governance. The Philippines and the EU agreed on two new development initiatives in 2013 for the Health Sector Reform Contract and the Mindanao Reconstruction and Development Fund. Budget support will be combined with capacity building to implement the Universal Health Care Agenda providing health insurance to more than 85% of the population including the poorest. The Peace Process in Mindanao will benefit from community-based development initiatives assisting more than 500 000 poor in the conflict-affected region of Bangsamoro. Discussions during the Working Group were also held on the proposed future focal sectors for the period 2014 to 2020, which will aim to maximise the impact of EU assistance to the Government reform agenda.
14. The 9th Philippines - EU SOM is scheduled to be held in the Philippines in 2015.