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Secretary Del Rosario Visits Vietnam, Discusses South China Sea and Other Bilateral Issues

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03 July 2014 – Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario visited Hanoi yesterday, July 02, to follow up on the successful visit to the Philippines of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung in May 2014.

Secretary Del Rosario expressed his appreciation to the Government of Vietnam for its warm hospitality and his meetings with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh.

The discussions between the Foreign Ministers were comprehensive, constructive and productive, and covered bilateral cooperative projects, international and regional concerns, and people-to-people ties.

On a bilateral basis, the two Ministers discussed a wide range of issues and agreed to further promote cooperation in many areas such as fisheries, ocean and maritime, defense and security, trade and investment. The Foreign Ministers also agreed to advance partnership to a higher level, including the establishment of a Joint Commission headed by the two Ministers to formulate a road map in working towards a strategic partnership.

In particular, the Foreign Ministers exchanged views on the rising tension in the South China Sea, and discussed the urgent need to address the escalating challenges through peaceful means and in accordance with international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The two Foreign Ministers urged that the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) be implemented in its entirety, including refraining from the use of coercive force. The two Ministers also agreed that the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) be expeditiously concluded without undue delay. In this regard, the two Ministers reaffirmed the ASEAN Joint Statement on the Developments in the South China Sea issued on the 10th of May 2014 and the ASEAN Six Point Principles on the South China Sea.

The two Foreign Ministers reaffirmed the invaluable friendship between their countries and the importance of their partnership in ASEAN.

The two sides likewise reaffirmed their common commitment to promote the rule of law and the peaceful resolution of disputes. END

PHL Renews Call for Peaceful, Rules-Based Resolution of Sea Disputes during High-Level Meetings in Myanmar

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09 June 2014 - The Philippines renewed its call for the peaceful, rules-based resolution of disputes in the West Philippine Sea and South China Sea during high-level meetings of the ASEAN, ASEAN Plus Three (APT), East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Yangon, Myanmar.

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Evan P. Garcia, Philippine Senior Official and Head of Delegation to the meetings, emphasized that recent provocative and unilateral actions by China constitute an infringement on the rights of the Philippines and other countries under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and a violation of the 2002 ASEAN China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC).

He called on all parties to exercise self-restraint as provided by paragraph 5 of the DOC, citing that these unilateral actions "raise the level of tensions to a new high and undermine the spirit of good neighborly ties and mutual confidence necessary for the region to move forward and decisively to implement the DOC fully and effectively."

He underlined the urgency for ASEAN and China to expeditiously conclude a substantive and legally-binding Code of Conduct.

Noting that the Arbitral Tribunal has fixed 15 December 2014 as the date by which China can submit its response to the Philippine Memorial, Undersecretary Garcia stated that Philippines has invited China from the very beginning to take part in the peaceful, rules-based process to clarify the extent of its maritime claims before the international community.

The Philippines called for regional maritime norms which are compliant with international law to promote good order at sea, to serve as confidence-building measures and to reduce risks of miscalculation.

The series of meetings hosted by Myanmar, Chair of ASEAN in 2014, which began last Saturday, June 7, to prepare for the Ministerial Meetings in August, reviewed the progress of regional cooperation in comprehensive areas and discussed strategic and security issues affecting the Asia-Pacific region. END

PHL Underscores Importance of UNCLOS in Ocean Governance

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ASEAN Importance Of UNCLOS

02 June 2014 - The Philippines described the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the foremost authority on ocean governance and called for its full implementation during the 2nd ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Seminar on UNCLOS held from May 28 to 29 in Manila.

"It is imperative that all countries are clear on the various provisions of UNCLOS and their proper interpretations. This is why the full operationalization of the dispute settlement mechanisms provided by the UNCLOS is crucial. By subjecting our disputes to the full weight of the Convention, we elevate the rule of law from theory to practice," said the Department of Foreign Affairs' Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs Eduardo Jose A. de Vega in his opening remarks during the Seminar.

Assistant Secretary de Vega co-chaired the Seminar for the Philippines with Katrina Cooper, Senior Legal Adviser of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Seminar saw presentations from experts from all over the world on the intricacies of UNCLOS and its provisions and applications, particularly in maritime boundary delimitation, possibilities for cooperation, and dispute settlement. The participants also discussed the emerging issue of protecting marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).

The expert speakers put forward several recommendations, including the establishment of a fisheries commission in the South China Sea to protect fish stocks in the area, as well as a mechanism under the ARF for the settlement of maritime disputes in the region. Participants also discussed the clarification of maritime claims to facilitate not only the settlement of disputes, but also the joint development of marine resources outside disputed areas.

Representatives dealing with Law of the Sea issues from 21 countries and the European Union attended the Seminar, which is a continuing initiative of the Philippines and Australia that began with the 1st ARF Seminar on UNCLOS in Manila in 2011. The Seminar was held amid incidents surrounding the conflicting claims in the South China Sea. Four of the claimant countries – the Philippines, Viet Nam, Brunei and Malaysia – are members of ASEAN, while China is an ASEAN Dialogue Partner. All five countries are members of the ARF.

The ASEAN Regional Forum is a venue for multilateral dialogue on regional security issues in the Asia-Pacific region. The workshop is one among various activities under the maritime security priority area of the ARF. END

Philippines and Indonesia Sign Agreement on EEZ Boundary

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23 May 2014 - The Republic of the Philippines and the Republic of Indonesia today signed the Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Concerning the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Boundary during the State Visit of His Excellency Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario and Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr. R.M. Marty M. Natalegawa signed the Agreement during ceremonies in Malacañan witnessed by President Benigno S. Aquino III and President Yudhoyono.

The Agreement includes the annexed charts showing the EEZ Boundary of the Philippines and Indonesia in the Mindanao Sea and Celebes Sea in the southern Philippines and in the Philippine Sea on the southern section of the Pacific Ocean. It is the result of 20 years of negotiation to delimit the overlapping EEZs of the two countries. The Agreement is a milestone for Philippines-Indonesia relations as the EEZ Boundary will open opportunities for closer cooperation in the preservation and protection of the rich marine environment in the area, increased trade and enhanced maritime security.

The Agreement on the EEZ Boundary was reached on the basis of international law including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the state practice and decisions of international tribunals on maritime boundary delimitation. It is the result of a rules-based negotiation to peacefully resolve maritime issues between two archipelagic states.

This is the first maritime boundary treaty of the Philippines. The EEZ boundary line defines the limits of the sea space in the southern Philippines thereby giving our fishermen and other stakeholders a clear extent of the area where they can exercise the sovereign rights over the waters as provided for by national laws and treaties including the 1982 UNCLOS. The EEZ boundary will also enhance the efforts of government agencies to enforce Philippine fishing, maritime and security laws.

The Agreement is the result of the work of the Philippines-Indonesia Joint Permanent Working Group on Maritime and Oceans Concerns (JPWG-MOC). Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Policy Evan P. Garcia led the Philippine Delegation to the 8th Meeting of the JPWG-MOC on 18 May 2014 in Jakarta where the text of the Agreement and the charts were finalized. Mr. Gilberto G.B. Asuque, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Philippine Embassy in Tokyo and Head of the Philippine Technical Working Group on Maritime Boundary Delimitation, and his Indonesian counterpart assisted the JPWG-MOC. The National Mapping and Resources Information Administration of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and its Indonesian counterparts assisted the JPWG-MOC in the preparation of the charts for the EEZ Boundary. Representatives of the Department of Transportation and Communications-Philippine Coast Guard, Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Department of National Defense-Armed Forces of the Philippines (particularly the Philippine Navy), Department of Justice, Department of Energy, DENR, and the Office of the Executive Secretary, are among the major stakeholder agencies that assisted the Philippine negotiators in the series of meetings with Indonesia on the delimitation of the overlapping EEZ. END

Indonesian President to Undertake State Visit to PHL

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20 May 2014 – Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono will undertake a State Visit to the Philippines on 22-23 May 2014, upon the invitation of President Benigno S. Aquino III on 05 January 2012.

President Yudhoyono will be attending Manila's hosting of the World Economic Forum on East Asia (WEF-EA) on May 22, where he will be conferred with the Global Statesmanship Award, and witness the official turn over to Indonesia of the hosting of the 24th WEF-EA in 2015.

On May 23, President Yudhoyono will meet with President Aquino to discuss matters of mutual concern, including political, defense and border, maritime, economic and socio-cultural cooperation. President Yudhoyono will also be conferred with the Order of Sikatuna with rank of Raja during the State Dinner to be hosted in his honor.

Indonesia was the 13th major trading partner of the Philippines in 2013, with a total trade of US\$ 3.512 billion. There is a 9,844-strong Filipino community living and working in Indonesia. This year also marks the 65th Anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Indonesia.

This will be President Yudhoyono's first bilateral visit to the Philippines since he became Indonesia's President for two consecutive terms in 2004 and 2009. President Aquino undertook his State Visit to Indonesia on 07-09 March 2011. END

Philippines, Indonesia Finalize Text of Agreement and Chart on EEZ Boundary

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Jakarta

19 May 2014- The Philippines and Indonesia completed the negotiations for the delimitation of their overlapping exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in the Mindanao Sea and Celebes Sea with the finalization of the text of the Agreement and the chart on the EEZ Boundary.

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Policy Evan P. Garcia, head of the Philippine delegation, and Ms. Wiwiek Setyawati Firman, Acting Director General for Legal Affairs and International Treaties in the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, endorsed for signing by their governments the "Agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the Republic of Indonesia Concerning the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone Boundary."

The two officials presided over the 8th Meeting of the Joint Permanent Working Group on Maritime and Ocean Concerns (JPWG-MOC) held on May 18 in Jakarta where their delegations reviewed the text of the Agreement and the chart showing the EEZ Boundary.

"The conclusion of the negotiations attests to the friendship, patience, goodwill and commitment of the Governments of the Philippines and Indonesia to peacefully address maritime issues. This is a significant contribution to, and an example of, reasonable efforts to build a stable and peaceful regional community, in consideration of the interests of countries concerned and in accordance with international law," Undersecretary Garcia noted in his opening remarks.

Undersecretary Garcia also stressed in his opening remarks the importance of a clearly defined maritime boundary between the Philippines and Indonesia as it will "promote more cooperation in the EEZ in order to advance our common interest of managing and preserving the resources in the EEZ for the benefit of our peoples."

He added that the Philippines learned so many lessons in the 20-year negotiations on the delimitation of the overlapping EEZs, particularly on the principles and the methods that were applied to reach an EEZ boundary line. Philippine Ambassador to Indonesia Maria Rosario C. Aguinaldo, and Mr. Gilberto Asuque, Head of the Philippine Technical Working Group on Maritime Boundary Delimitation and Deputy Chief of Mission of the Philippine Embassy in Tokyo, assisted Undersecretary Garcia during the meeting, along with the other members of the Philippine delegation.

The 8th meeting of the JPWG-MOC was preceded by the 4th Preparatory Meeting of the Technical Team held on May 17 also in Jakarta where the diplomats, hydrographers and the cartographers of the two countries prepared the text of the Agreement and the details of the chart for the consideration of the JPWG-MOC.

Mr. Asuque and Mr. Octavino, Director for Political, Security and Territorial Treaties and Head of the Indonesian Technical Working Group on Maritime Boundary Delimitation, led their respective technical panels in the preparatory meeting for the 8th Meeting of the JPWG-MOC.

Undersecretary Garcia and Acting Director General Firman exchanged copies of the Record of Discussion of the 8th JPWG-MOC that included the draft Agreement and the chart

which they endorsed for signing by Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario and Foreign Minister Dr. R.M. Marty M. Natalegawa at the soonest possible time.

The charts illustrating the EEZ Boundary were signed for the Philippines by Dr. Peter N. Tiangco, Administrator, National Mapping and Resources Information Authority (NAMRIA) and Capt. Jacinto Cablayan, Director, Hydrography Branch, NAMRIA, and for Indonesia by Mr. Asep Karsidi, Head of the Indonesian Geospatial Information Agency and Cdr. Dede Yuliadi, Chief Hydrographer, Hydro-Oceanographic Office, Indonesian Navy.

The Philippines and Indonesia commenced the negotiations for the delimitation of their overlapping EEZs in June 1994 with the establishment of the JPWG-MOC with its Sub-Working Groups and the Joint Technical Team. The JPWG-MOC and Technical Team held series of alternating meetings from 1994 to 2014 in the Philippines and Indonesia to come up with a delimitation line for the overlapping EEZs in the Mindanao Sea and Celebes Sea.

The signing of the Agreement on the EEZ Boundary is the culmination of 20 years of negotiations by diplomatic and technical representatives of the two archipelagic states to find an equitable solution to their overlapping EEZs. END

Secretary Del Rosario to Highlight Rule of Law in ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Other Meetings in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

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9 May 2014 – Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario will highlight the Philippines' advocacy of the rule of law as he joins other ASEAN Foreign Ministers in the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) on May 10 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Apart from the AMM, the Secretary will attend the 11th ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Council Meeting and the 14th Meeting of the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC). The Meetings are part of the preparations for the 24th ASEAN Summit which will officially begin on May 11.

Topics for discussion during the aforementioned meetings reflect the priorities of Myanmar's chairmanship that bears the theme, "Moving Forward in Unity to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community." The topics include, among others:

- Regional and international issues;
- Guidelines and future directions for ASEAN's external relations;
- Climate change, disaster management, transnational crime;
- Food and energy security;
- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs); and
- Human rights issues.

On May 11, the Secretary will join the delegation of President Benigno S. Aquino III at the 24th ASEAN Summit, ASEAN Leaders' Interface Meeting with Representatives of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), ASEAN Leaders' Interface Meeting with Representatives of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and ASEAN Leaders' Meeting with ASEAN Youth. END

Statement of Secretary Albert F. Del Rosario on the Signing of the Philippines-US Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement

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28 April 2014

The Philippines welcomes the signing of the PH-US Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

This Agreement, concluded after intensive and comprehensive negotiations over the course of nearly two years, marks a milestone in our shared history as enduring treaty allies.

The EDCA elevates to a higher plane of engagement our already robust defense alliance, a cornerstone of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. It provides new momentum for our partnership and opens up fresh avenues of bilateral cooperation.

Given the rapidly evolving regional architecture and domestic realities, our dynamic and forward-looking partnership attaches great importance in enhancing our individual and collective self-defense capabilities, strengthening maritime security and maritime domain awareness, and improving humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capacities.

These are valuable components of a responsible and responsive security engagement that will benefit both our countries and peoples, and contribute to regional and international security and stability.

With the EDCA, the Philippines and the United States as sovereign allies have written a new chapter for our modern and mature partnership, firmly grounded on deeply-held democratic values, common interests and shared aspirations. END

Comprehensive Peace Agreement on the Bangsamoro Showcased at ASEAN Peace and Reconciliation Symposium

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ASEAN JASF

10 April 2014 – The newly signed Comprehensive Peace Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) was put under the spotlight during the Symposium on Peace and Reconciliation Processes and Initiatives held by the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) this week.

Professor Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, Chair of the Philippine Government Peace Negotiating Panel in talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and Hon. Tengku Dato' Abdul Ghafar Bin Tengku Mohamed, Facilitator for the GPH-MILF Peace Process and AIPR Advisory Board Member, shared their experiences leading up to the signing of the landmark document and outlined the hopes and challenges towards its implementation.

The Philippines' experience with the CAB was part of the symposium's five sessions of presentations which are meant to help give the AIPR Governing Council an overview of the peace and reconciliation initiatives being undertaken in the region and throughout the world and to pick up on best practices in peace and mediation efforts. The Governing Council is the highest policy-making body of the AIPR and will set the future direction of the fledgling ASEAN Institute.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Teresita Quintos-Deles, who is the Philippines' representative to the AIPR Advisory Board, keynoted the symposium, saying that the

AIPR must be strengthened "as a strategic force not only for peace, but for human freedom, common prosperity and collective security throughout our region."

She said the AIPR should look beyond its mandate of conducting research and capacity-building, and consider gathering and consolidating all the narratives of peace in the region over the decades, extracting the lessons learned and best practices, and forging a consensus of how to move forward on future challenges.

"The documentation of conflict resolution and preventive diplomacy in ASEAN could be a vital resource not only for the region but for the whole world," Secretary Deles emphasized.

"Lessons learned across our organization could guide governments and civil society in several parts of the world where strife has reared its head, where workers for peace are on constant search for ways to silence guns and tempers that flare in the heat of anger and misunderstanding. Here in our own turf, the AIPR needs to explore ways for the ASEAN and its member states to strengthen their capacity in early warning, good offices, mediation, and conciliation. We must not only wage peace by stopping hostilities, but by making sure that the gains of peace processes benefit those who need it most," she added.

ASEAN JASF2Members of the AIPR Governing Council and Advisory Board gathered for the two-day symposium to listen to the ideas and experiences of renowned experts in peace and mediation initiatives. The symposium came a few days after the historic signing of the CAB, which is being hailed as a major step by peace advocates all throughout the world.

Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Evan P. Garcia, who delivered the opening remarks, said that the symposium is a landmark event, with all the AIPR Governing Council members and AIPR Advisory Board members present. "We have in our midst the initial pool of experts from ASEAN Member States who will assist ASEAN on conflict management and conflict resolution activities in the future." He said.

Other speakers during the symposium include H.E. Gunnar Stålsett, Bishop Emeritus of Oslo, Norway and Special Advisor to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Member of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee; Dr. Michael Vatikiotis, Asian Regional Director of the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue; former Indonesian Ambassador and AIPR Advisory Board Member Ms. Artauli R.M.P. Tobing; Rodolfo C. Severino, Head of the ASEAN Studies Center of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore and Former Secretary-General of ASEAN; Associate Dean Prof. Joseph Chinyong Liow of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and Member of the AIPR Advisory Board; Dr. Julian Vassallo, Chargé d'Affaires of the Delegation of the European Union to the Philippines; Prof. Sukehiro Hasegawa of the UN University and Hosei University and former Special Representative of the UN Secretary General to Timor-Leste; and Executive Director Ms. Rahimah Abdulrahim of the Habibie Center in Indonesia.

Philippine Permanent Representative to ASEAN and AIPR Governing Council Member Elizabeth P. Buensuceso, who was the organizer of the event, said that she was very pleased at how the Symposium turned out and appreciated the active participation of the representatives of each ASEAN Member State in the discussions. She said that there are high hopes for the AIPR and that the first symposium is just one of the many upcoming activities that the institute will undertake in strengthening its mandate to become the ASEAN Region's premier institution for promoting peace and reconciliation initiatives.

The AIPR will hold its second symposium later this month in Bali, Indonesia from April 21 to 23. END

Statement of Secretary Albert F. del Rosario on the Submission of the Philippines' Memorial to The Arbitral Tribunal

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30 March 2014

Thank you everyone for your presence here on a Sunday.

Today, the Philippines submitted its Memorial to the Arbitral Tribunal that is hearing the case it brought against the People's Republic of China under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in January 2013.

The Philippines' Memorial was submitted in conformity with the Rules of Procedure adopted by the five-member Arbitral Tribunal last August, which established 30 March 2014 as the due date for its submission.

The Memorial presents the Philippines' case on the jurisdiction of the Arbitral Tribunal and the merits of its claims. It consists of ten volumes. Volume I, which is 270 pages in length, contains the Philippines' analysis of the applicable law and the relevant evidence, and demonstrates that the Arbitral Tribunal has jurisdiction over all of the claims made by the Philippines' in its Statement of Claim, and that every claim is meritorious. It sets out the specific relief sought by the Philippines in regard to each of its claims, and shows why it is entitled to such relief.

Volumes II through X contain the documentary evidence and maps that support the Philippines' claims, all of which are cited in Volume I. Volumes II through X consist of more than 3,700 pages, including more than 40 maps, for a total submission of nearly 4,000 pages.

The Memorial is the result of an enormous, collaborative effort by the extremely capable and dedicated legal team that has been serving the Philippines in this important case, headed by Solicitor General Francis Jardeleza and a team of lawyers from various agencies, including the OSG, DFA, DOJ, and the Office of the President.

I also wish to thank other government agencies for their invaluable contribution in the generation of documents including:

- The Department of Justice (DOJ);
- The Department of National Defense (DND), particularly the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine Navy, and Philippine Air Force (PAF) ;
- The Department of Transportation and Communications, particularly the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG);
- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, specifically the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA);
- The Department of Energy (DOE);
- The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR);
- The Foreign Service Institute (FSI);

· And other agencies such as National Museum, National Historical Commission, National Archives, DILG's Philippine National Police, Municipality of Kalayaan, and the UP Marine Science Institute.

We are also most grateful to our international legal advisers led by Paul Reichler and his team of international lawyers, including Mr. Lawrence H. Martin, Professor Bernard H. Oxman, Professor Philippe Sands, and Professor Alan Boyle for their invaluable guidance and assistance.

Ordinarily, the next step in an arbitration of this nature would be the filing of a Counter-Memorial by the other Party. However, it is currently unknown whether China will appear in the case, or whether it will continue its present policy of abstaining from the proceedings. Under the Rules of Procedure, the Arbitral Tribunal will decide on next steps and advise the Parties.

The Philippines will follow the guidance of the Arbitral Tribunal in regard to the publication of the Memorial. In the meantime, out of respect for the Tribunal and the arbitral process, it is obliged to preserve confidentiality.

With firm conviction, the ultimate purpose of the Memorial is our national interest.

It is about defending what is legitimately ours.

It is about securing our children's future.

It is about guaranteeing freedom of navigation for all nations.

It is about helping to preserve regional peace, security and stability.

And finally, it is about seeking not just any kind of resolution but a just and durable solution grounded on International Law.

Thank you very much indeed for your kind attention.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib to Witness Signing of Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro

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25 March 2014 – Malaysian Prime Minister Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak will undertake a Working Visit to the Philippines on 27 March 2014, upon the invitation of President Benigno S. Aquino III, in order to witness the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro.

Prior to the signing ceremony, Prime Minister Najib will meet with the President, to briefly discuss matters of mutual concern between the Philippines and Malaysia.

Malaysia has been the facilitator of peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (GPH-MILF) since 2001, and has hosted the talks in Kuala Lumpur. It is also the leader of the International Monitoring Team observing the GPH-MILF ceasefire.

Prime Minister Najib previously visited the Philippines on 14-15 October 2012 to witness the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro. The last meeting between President Aquino and Prime Minister Najib was during the former's State Visit to Malaysia on 27-28 February 2014. END

Secretary Del Rosario Delivers Lecture on West Philippine Sea Issue, Encourages Youth to be Patriots

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PISU Lecture On West Phil Sea1

12 March 2014 – As part of the Department of Foreign Affairs' (DFA's) public diplomacy efforts to educate young Filipinos about the West Philippine Sea (WPS) issue, Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario delivered a lecture before Grade 7 and 4th-year high school students of De La Salle Santiago Zobel (DLSZ) last March 10, held at the DLSZ Sylvia P. Lina Theater in Alabang, Muntinlupa City.

Br. Bernard S. Oca, FSC, DLSZ President and High School Principal welcomed the DFA Delegation and exhorted the student body to understand the crucial issue that the country is facing today.

PISU Lecture On West Phil Sea2Secretary Del Rosario began his lecture by introducing the students to the three pillars of Philippine Foreign Policy, namely: the preservation of national security, enhancement of economic diplomacy, and the protection of Filipinos overseas. He pointed out that defending the national territory falls under the first pillar. The Secretary then explained the full extent of Philippine territory, emphasizing the inclusion of the maritime zones defined by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

"Now we go back to our question, what is the extent of Philippine territory? It is the Philippine archipelago, other lands or islands which we own and govern, such as the Kalayaan Island Group (Spratly Group of Islands) and Bajo de Masinloc (Panatag or Scarborough Shoal), and also include our maritime zones that we just discussed. All these comprise Philippine territory," Secretary Del Rosario underscored.

He also stressed the importance of preserving freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, noting that about 40% to 60% of world trade passes through it.

The Secretary focused his discussion on China's claims over Recto Bank and Bajo de Masinloc and maintained that China's expansive nine-dash line claim has no basis in international law. Secretary Del Rosario emphasized the mandate from President Benigno S. Aquino III to pursue a peaceful resolution to the dispute.

Secretary Del Rosario said, "We are, in fact, committed to undertake all that is possible to cultivate positive relations with China in spite of this issue in the South China Sea/West Philippine Sea."

The students were likewise enlightened about the political, diplomatic and legal tracks that constitute the Philippines' rules-based approach to the issue.

The Secretary described the legal track to be the "last resort" and expressed belief that it is "a durable and lasting solution to settling the disputes."

He also explained the concept of a "minimum credible defense posture" and how the Philippines has been working with its international partners to achieve it.

In closing, Secretary Del Rosario urged the students to take a strong stand for the country and "defend what is rightfully ours."

"This is a collective call for all Filipinos to unite as one. This is a call for you to be a patriot," the Secretary concluded.

Following the lecture was a lively Q&A session. More than 700 students, DLSZ administrators and faculty members, and DFA officials were present during the lecture. This was the first time that a member of the Cabinet spoke about the West Philippine Sea Issue in DLSZ.

The lecture was a project of the DLZS Grade School Student Representative Coordinating Council, led by its President, Sean Dominique L. Brago, with the support of the DLZS administration, headed by DLZS President and High School Principal Br. Bernard S. Oca FSC, Grade School Principal Ruby P. Ramos, and High School Vice-Principal Agnes B. Panaligan.

END

Philippines, Argentina successfully hold 2nd Bilateral Consultation Meeting in Manila

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OAA PHL Argentina

20 February 2014 – The Philippines and Argentina held the 2nd Bilateral Consultation Meeting in Manila yesterday, February 19. The Philippine delegation was led by Department of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Policy Evan P. Garcia while Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Worship Undersecretary for Foreign Policy Maria del Carmen Squell led the Argentine delegation.

Undersecretary Garcia and Undersecretary Squell affirmed the solid ties between the Philippines and Argentina, which are founded on mutual respect, shared heritage and a common commitment to democracy and open economies. The bonds of friendship between their two peoples underpin the two countries' common desire to forge stronger and closer relations between their societies.

The two countries agreed to capitalize on their close historic-cultural affinities and transform them into solid opportunities for cooperation. The Philippines and Argentina agreed to expand bilateral trade, increase trade missions and business meetings to take advantage of economic complementarities in both countries.

The two sides commended the work of the Working Group on Technical Cooperation and agreed to meet again to draft the Plan of Action for 2015-2017 in Buenos Aires in the last quarter of 2014.

The two countries' cooperation in the areas of culture, education, sports and diplomatic training offers a lot of potential in increasing people-to-people contacts between their citizens and agreed to convene this year the 1st meeting of the Working Group on Cultural Cooperation.

Undersecretary Garcia briefed the Argentine delegation of the successes in the Philippine Government's peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, developments in ASEAN including maritime issues, and the progress in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of areas severely damaged by Typhoon Yolanda. Undersecretary Garcia expressed the Philippine government's sincere appreciation for the sympathies of the Argentine people.

Undersecretary Squell briefed the Philippine delegation on the developments in Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Argentina also shared its experience in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The two sides agreed that their countries will continue to work together in addressing global issues of mutual concern mainly through common approaches in multilateral platforms.
END

Secretary Del Rosario Calls for Unity on the South China Sea Issue at ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat

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17 January 2014 – Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario called for ASEAN to “maintain regional solidarity” amidst prevailing tensions, citing recent reports of a new Chinese fishing regulation in the South China Sea, as well as the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) established last November.

“Clearly, in addition to unilateral measures to change the status quo and threats to the stability of the region, these latest developments violate the legitimate rights of coastal and other states under international law, including UNCLOS, and more specifically the principles of freedom of navigation and overflight, and is contrary to the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC),” the Secretary said during the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat in Bagan, Myanmar on January 17.

The new Hainan Fisheries Law, which takes effect this month, would require all foreign fishing vessels to obtain approval from authorities before transiting into Hainan's administrative zone in the South China Sea. The ECS ADIZ similarly obligates aircraft flying through the zone to provide identification and follow instructions or face defensive emergency measures from China's armed forces.

The Secretary added that ASEAN's work for a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) to manage tensions might be undermined if such changes to the status quo persist.

At the Retreat, Secretary del Rosario enumerated the Philippines' priorities in ASEAN under Myanmar's chairmanship, which include: pursuit of a rules-based ASEAN Community of shared values and norms; support for the development of ASEAN's Post-2015 Vision; review and assessment of regional disaster management mechanisms; early conclusion of ASEAN instruments to combat trafficking in persons; promotion and protection of human rights and enhancement of maritime connectivity in ASEAN.

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat is the first meeting under Myanmar's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014. It is the first time for Myanmar to chair ASEAN since joining the ten-member organization on 23 July 1997. The theme of Myanmar's chairmanship is “Moving Forward in Unity to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community”. END

President Aquino Calls for Adherence to Rule of Law to Ensure Peace and Stability in the South China Sea

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10 October 2013 - President Benigno S. Aquino III today emphasized that rules and norms anchored on international law are fundamental in promoting trust and confidence among nations, and in ensuring stability and peace in the international community.

“At the core of the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership is the belief that our actions should adhere to the rule of law,” President Aquino said at the 16th ASEAN-China Summit in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam.

President Aquino said that the Philippines has taken a two-track complementary approach to disputes in that sea with many names that is both peaceful and rules-based.

"First, to manage tensions, we are advocating an expeditious conclusion of the ASEAN-China Code of Conduct. Second, to resolve disputes, we are pursuing arbitration for the clarification of maritime entitlements. Both tracks are legally-binding and anchored on international law," the President explained.

The President said that there is a collective problem in the sea known by many names: territories in a sea which is west of the Philippines, east of Vietnam, north of Malaysia, south of China are claimed in whole, or in part, by all.

"These claims have led to tensions, and these have created problems between us," the President stressed. However, "a problem can be turned into an opportunity if we have the will to act now and not pass on the burden to succeeding generations."

Noting that the first official consultations between ASEAN and China on the Code of Conduct were held last month in Suzhou, China, the President stressed that the early conclusion of a legally-binding Code of Conduct is necessary to foster peace, positive engagement and stability in the region.

"As we look towards finalizing the COC, we urge all parties to observe implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the sea known by many names in all its aspects," the President said. END

Phl Reiterates Rules-Based Approach to Maintain Peace and Stability in the South China Sea

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WPSC Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum

04 October 2013 – The Philippines reiterated that adherence to the rule of law is imperative in maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea.

Speaking at the 2nd Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) in Kuala Lumpur on 3 October 2013, Assistant Secretary Henry S. Bensurto Jr. of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)-West Philippine Sea Center emphasized that to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea, the region needs a rules-based framework in the management of territorial disputes and the resolution of maritime claims.

"To maintain order and stability in the South China Sea, we need predictability in the way we all behave with each other. To be predictable means, we need to have certain agreed standards, rules and norms. These standards, rules and norms in turn must be objective, impartial and non-discriminatory. International law is one objective standard," Assistant Secretary Bensurto stressed.

Assistant Secretary Bensurto added that in the matter of seas, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which has been universally-recognized as the "Constitution of the Oceans," prescribes rights, obligations and maritime entitlements that ought to be respected by all State-Parties to the Convention.

"There is a fundamental difference between entitlements and claims under international law. Expressed provisions of UNCLOS on maritime entitlements, including a coastal state's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), are rights that lawfully demand respect from all State-Parties.

Claims, on the other hand, are just mere claims that may not necessarily generate rights unless duly proven in an appropriate forum," Assistant Secretary Bensurto explained.

Assistant Secretary Bensurto led the Philippine delegation to the 4th ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) and 2nd EAMF in Kuala Lumpur from 01 to 03 October 2013. He was joined by representatives from the DFA, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Philippine Ports Authority, NAMRIA, Philippine Navy and the Philippine Coast Guard.

AMF features the 10 member States of ASEAN namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam while the EAMF is composed of all ASEAN member states, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States. END

ASEAN and China Launch Official Consultations on Code of Conduct in South China Sea; Phl Calls for Deliberate and Rules-Based Process in Moving Forward

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16 September 2013 - The Philippines attended the 6th Senior Officials Meeting and 9th Joint Working Group on Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct (DOC) of Parties in the South China Sea in Suzhou, China on September 14 and 15.

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Policy Evan P. Garcia, Assistant Secretary for ASEAN Affairs Teresita V. Barsana, and Assistant Secretary Henry Bensurto, Jr. of the West Philippine Sea Center comprised the Philippine delegation.

At the meeting, ASEAN Member States and China held their first official consultation on a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea.

Senior Officials agreed on the process and modality of moving forward. They agreed to continue official consultations on the COC on a regular basis, and make regular reports to Foreign Ministers.

They tasked a Joint Working Group (JWG) to hold in-depth discussions on all aspects of the COC, including consideration of expert services that would support the work of official consultations.

They also agreed that Senior Officials and the JWG shall hold more frequent meetings on the COC.

During the meeting, the Philippines expressed its position that the COC should be legally-binding and be developed through a deliberate process of intergovernmental negotiations.

The Philippines also called for respect for principles of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, particularly the non-use of force or coercion.

The Philippines shared its views on the work of the Joint Working Group on the COC.

Undersecretary Garcia pointed out that the international community was looking at ASEAN and China to make progress on the COC.

He emphasized that to maintain momentum, official talks between ASEAN and China on the COC should be held regularly; talks should be substantive and robust, taking up all issues; and talks should aim to establish rules and norms of behavior that would contribute to enhancement of peace and stability in the South China Sea and thus, the region.

The Meeting also considered a workplan for the Implementation of the DOC for 2014, which included cooperative projects on implementation of the DOC.

The Philippines looked forward to actively participating in subsequent official consultations on the COC in the ASEAN-China Joint Working Group and Senior Officials Meeting. END

Secretary Del Rosario Expresses Concern Over "Militarization" of the South China Sea
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30 June 2013 - Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario today expressed serious concern over the increasing militarization of the South China Sea, calling the massive presence of Chinese military and paramilitary ships in Scarborough Shoal and around Ayungin Shoal, which are integral part of Philippine territory, as threats to efforts to maintain maritime peace and stability in the region.

Speaking at the 46th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting, Secretary Del Rosario said the persistence of destabilizing actions in the West Philippine Sea continues to pose serious challenges for the whole region.

"This is a violation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC)," Secretary Del Rosario emphasized. "We reiterate our continued advocacy for a peaceful and rules-based settlement of disputes in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law."

The Foreign Secretary added that the operational application of a rules-based approach in the resolution and management of disputes in the South China Sea involves two complementary components: 1. the expeditious arbitration of maritime disputes under UNCLOS; and 2. the early conclusion of a Code of Conduct between ASEAN and China.

Secretary Del Rosario underscored that the clarification of maritime entitlements, which the Philippines seeks via its recourse to arbitration under the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), promotes the primacy of the rule of law in inter-state relations.

"The legal track does not constitute abandonment of diplomatic avenues. We continue to exert efforts to move forward and enhance our relations with China on the basis of mutual respect and sovereign equality. Neither does the case diminish our zeal to pursue a binding Code of Conduct," Secretary Del Rosario stressed.

Secretary Del Rosario said that "as we all exert efforts towards the early conclusion of a binding Code of Conduct, in the interim, it is our expectation that all parties would comply in utmost good faith with all the provisions of the DOC."

The Foreign Secretary said that a secure and stable environment and enhanced well-being of people are imperatives to ensure the peace and prosperity of the region.

"If we are to live up to our vision of a politically cohesive, economically integrated and people-oriented ASEAN Community, then now, more than ever, is the time to reaffirm our own remarkable brand of unity amidst diversity," Secretary Del Rosario said. END

Lic. Ezequiel Ramoneda