



## 2008 Philippine Development Forum

### STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

*The Philippines has achieved substantial GDP growth in 2007. The European Union, while congratulating the Philippines on this achievement, reaffirms its partnership with the Government to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to fight poverty on a basis of truly inclusive growth. This implies not only increasing the strengthening of social services, but also ensuring that additional efforts are targeted at the poor, in particular at those who remain excluded from basic services in education and health.*

*Considering that political stability and the eradication of corruption are prerequisites for sustainable development, the European Union finds the persistent allegations of widespread graft in public procurement most disturbing and urges the Government and other relevant State institutions to step up efforts to combat it.*

*The European Union commends the Philippines for its macro-economic achievements in 2007 with controlled inflation, a balanced budget and an improved balance of payments, but wishes to highlight the need to improve the revenue effort and to match this with effective measures to reduce social inequality. The sustainability of the development effort will also be strengthened by maintaining and further developing the multi-year perspective on budgeting to support the Medium Term Philippines Development Plan.*

The European Union acknowledges the significant decrease in cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in recent months, and is heartened by the President's emphasis on the need for speedy prosecution and conviction of those responsible for such heinous acts. It notes with concern, however, that to date in no case have the perpetrators been made accountable. The EU welcomes the work of the Supreme Court in this field, and urges the Government to implement fully the recommendations of the UN Special Representative Philip Alston. The EU reaffirms its willingness to provide relevant technical assistance to the Philippines in this field.

Continued rapid population growth in the Philippines is draining health and economic resources and slowing down economic growth. It also threatens the sustainability of rural livelihoods and is inexorably destroying the remaining natural forest and marine habitats. The poor are paying the highest price, both individually and collectively. The European Union therefore calls for the effective implementation of a comprehensive national family planning policy, promoting access to family planning methods.

Agrarian reform, promoting sound rural development through equitable distribution of lands and effective support to Agrarian Reform Communities would have a major impact on reducing poverty in the Philippines, increasing agricultural production and diversification. The European Union therefore calls for the Comprehensive Agrarian

Reform Program (CARP) to be followed to its full goals, and to achieve its targets in land distribution accompanied by the necessary support services.

The European Union notes with concern the difficulties encountered of late in the peace process between the GRP and the MILF. The EU encourages all parties concerned to redouble efforts aimed at seizing the existing window of opportunity to bring lasting peace to the Southern Philippines. In this regard, the EU welcomes the ongoing tripartite review of the 1996 final peace agreement between the GRP and the MNLF, and urges all the parties and stakeholders to facilitate a process of rallying the various Moro constituencies around a shared vision of peace. The EU stands ready to deepen its support to the process as it progresses.

The European Union encourages the Government of the Philippines to continue its efforts to improve competitiveness, including through measures such as an effective competition policy and a reduction of the restrictions on foreign direct investment, in order to boost a business environment where a thriving private sector provides decent work opportunities to all Filipinos.

The European Union acknowledges the potential importance of the mining sector in contributing to economic growth, but underlines the essential importance of ensuring that mining is conducted in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. Mining in protected areas and other priority conservation sites (such as, for example, the Palawan or Sierra Madre forests) remains a matter of grave concern. Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, undertaken systematically prior to approving any mining concession, are the main tools for an effective monitoring of the impact of mining. All legal requirements should be effectively enforced to ensure the protection of rights and claims of indigenous peoples and other vulnerable communities including their fair share of the economic benefits, and to prevent the depletion of natural resources.

Since the Philippines is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of global warming, the European Union invites the Government to continue its efforts to integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation responses into the country's development strategies and programmes as well as to prevent environmental degradation and illegal logging.

The European Union shares with the Philippines its commitment to a successful WTO Doha Development Agenda round, and looks forward to full Philippine participation in the proposed EU-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement. The EU likewise looks forward to the early negotiation and conclusion of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the Philippines, strengthening our partnership and providing a legal basis apt for the requirements of today's interdependent world.