BILATERAL

AGREED MINUTES OF THE 1st JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF THE SEYCHELLES AND THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

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The inaugural Joint Committee Meeting between the Republic of Seychelles and the Republic of the Philippines, established in accordance with the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) signed in February 2010, took place in Victoria, Seychelles, on 22 October 2013.

Ambassador Barry Faure, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed the delegation from the Republic of the Seychelles.

Hon. Laura Q, Del Rosario, Undersecretary for International Economic Relations of the Department of Foreign Affairs, led the delegation from the Republic of the Philippines.

The members of the respective delegations are listed in Annex 1 of these minutes while the agenda of the First Joint Committee Meeting appears in Annex 2.

The first Joint Committee Meeting between the Republic of Seychelles and the Republic of the Philippines was held in a spirit of friendship, mutual understanding and cooperation.

During the meeting both sides expressed their satisfaction with the excellent ties of friendship and cooperation between the two countries and expressed their mutual interest to consolidate and broaden these bonds through the Joint Committee, Both sides acknowledged that their many commonalities provide an opportunity to work together across a variety of sectors including labor and' employment, trade and investment, tourism and culture, environment and renewable energy, agriculture and fisheries, and education and human resource development.

The decisions and understandings reached at the meeting are summarized below.

1. Finance, Trade and Investment

1.1. Both sides provided an overview of the economy of their respective countries and agreed on the need to increase cooperation in the field of finance, trade and investment between Seychelles and the Philippines.

1.2.To promote greater transparency and effective exchange of information for tax purposes, both sides highlighted the ongoing negotiations to conclude a Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA) in the near future as a positive step towards creating a more conducive environment for business between both countries.

1.3. Both sides also agreed to resume discussions for the possible conclusion of a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) once relevant authorities
have expressed their readiness to do so.

1.4. Both delegations encouraged more exchanges between the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of both countries,

1.5. The Philippines noted the interest of Seychelles in entering into negotiations for the proposed memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the sharing of expertise between the respective SME

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agencies of both countries and to promote interaction of their SME communities.

1.6. It was agreed that there is great potential for the sharing of expertise between the countries' respective SME communities, particularly in regards to Financing for SMEs, the set up of business incubation centers, providing technical support and strengthening the business know-how of aspiring entrepreneurs, It was also agreed that both countries should work together in developing their creative industries, mutually important sectors for both countries. The Seychelles Small Enterprises Promotions Agency (SENPA) agreed to provide Philippines more information on the needs of the SMEs in Seychelles and an invitation was extended for SENPA to conduct a study tour in the Philippines to learn from the Filipino experience in that sector.

1.7. Both sides acknowledged the possibility of Seychelles being a gateway for the Philippines to Africa.

1.8. The Seychelles Investment Board (SIB) expressed interest in entering into an MoU with its relevant counterpart in the Philippines to promote the exchange and dissemination of information and publications relating to trade, economic cooperation, trade fairs, exhibitions, policies, and economic legislation pertaining to investment between both countries. The proposed MoU would also seek to promote contacts between investors, manpower training and capacity building, and organizing investment promotional activities. An invitation was extended for the SIB to undertaking a working visit to the Philippines to discuss the proposed cooperation with the board of investments.

1.9. The . Seychelles side briefed the joint committee about the recent developments taking place in the upstream petroleum sector in Seychelles. An invitation was extended for a business delegation from the Philippines to undertake a scoping mission in the Seychelles to explore investment opportunities for that sector.

1.10. The Philippines noted the specific areas of cooperation and investment identified by the SIB and agreed to convey these to the relevant parties for consideration.

2. Labour and Employment

2.1. Both delegations discussed recent progress in the proposed Bilateral Labour Agreement, a draft model of which the Philippines had already provided Seychelles for review. Seychelles stated that the consolidated comments from its relevant authorities would be conveyed to the Philippines so that a legal framework for labour and employment cooperation between the two countries could be signed as soon as possible.

2.2. Seychelles also expressed its continued interest to recruit health specialists from the Philippines in the future, related to which the Seychelles Ministry of Health outlined the various areas in need of specialist doctors and nurses.

2.3. The Philippines welcomed the opportunity to assist Seychelles in enhancing its health services and explained that Seychelles is a positively certified destination country for overseas Filipino workers. Seychelles could therefore already proceed with recruiting the health professionals it requires, subject to compliance with requirements of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration such as the standard contract stipulating the terms and conditions of their employment and recruitment through licensed agencies based in the Philippines. '

2.4.The Philippines delegation noted the various priority sectors where there is currently a shortage of labour in Seychelles. Interest was also expressed by the Seychelles Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development (MLHRD) to enhance the capacity of its statistics unit.The Philippines delegation explained that the different statistical units in the Philippines were being restructured into the Philippine Statistics Authority and agreed to share its experience in this process. A suggestion was also made for the Seychelles to consider hiring a consultant from the Philippines to work on the labour market information system as well as any other priority area identified by the MLHRD.

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3. Air Services

3.1. The Seychelles side reiterated its interest to sign a Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BASA) with the Philippines, the draft model of which had been forwarded to the Civil Aeronautics Board of the Philippines. Seychelles expressed that the BASA is aimed at increasing the circulation of goods and people between both countries and improving air connectivity.

3.2.Both sides agreed to determine the earliest opportunity for direct negotiations on air services.

4. Tourism

4.1. Both sides acknowledged the potential for developing cooperation in the field of tourism and culture and the desire to see a greater exchange of visitors from their respective countries.

4.2. Seychelles expressed the view that strengthened tourism links would help increase the visibility of Seychelles within the ASEAN region and vice versa.

4.3. On the sharing of experience and capacity building exchanges, both sides welcomed ongoing discussions between the Seychelles Tourism Academy (STA) and the University of the Philippines (UP), University of Santo Tomas (UST), the Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU) and other relevant institutions.

4.4.The Philippines delegation took note of the interest of the Seychelles Tourism Board (STB) to learn about the hotel classification standards and how to integrate local artisans in the hotel value chain.

4.5.The Seychelles delegation also recognized the valuable role that the Filipino community is playing in the tourism sector, with many working at various hotel establishments across its islands.

5. Cultural Exchanges and Twinning Programme

5.1. Both sides proposed ways to bolster cultural exchanges between their respective countries. The Seychelles delegation suggested that the Philippines consider participation in the annual Carnival International de Victoria in 2014 by sending a performing group from the Philippines or by encouraging the significant number of Filipinos living and working in Seychelles to participate in such festivals, all for the purpose of enhancing people-to-people ties between Seychelles and the Philippines.

5.2. Seychelles expressed interest in establishing a twinning programme between Victoria and one of the vibrant cities in the Philippines, such as its capital Manila. It was clarified by the Seychelles delegation that it would be open to considering other cities like Cebu for the twinning, especially if there is broader scope for cooperation with a Philippine city that has characteristics or development concerns that are very similar to that of Victoria. Exchanges in youth and sports were also identified as possible areas of cooperation under the twinning programme.

6. Fisheries and Agriculture

6.1. The Seychelles delegation expressed interest in developing cooperation in the field of fisheries. The Seychelles Fishing Authority conveyed its eagerness to enter into a MoU with its relevant counterpart in the Philippines aimed at encouraging such cooperation. Both sides also agreed that cooperation with the Seychelles Bureau of Standards in terms of fish inspection and quality control will also be included in this proposed MoU.

6.2. The Seychelles side also welcomed Filipino purse seiners back to its waters, pointing out the declining threat of piracy in its Exclusive Economic Zone.

6.3.The Seychelles delegation also acknowledged the invaluable contribution the Filipino community continues to play in its fisheries sector, with a large number working with Indian Ocean Tuna (IOT)

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6.4. In the field of agriculture, Seychelles Agricultural Agency (SAA) briefed the Philippine side on the specific areas for potential collaboration, including technical cooperation on the exchange of genetic resources for food and agriculture, systems approach to fresh fruit and vegetable production, integrated pest management and multi-skilling in farming including maintenance of small farm equipment. SAA also indicated the need for assistance in developing Seychelles' veterinary services, particularly for livestock management.

6.5.The Philippines assured that the specific areas of cooperation identified by Seychelles would be conveyed to the University of the Philippines (Los Banos) College of Agriculture, which the Seychelles non-resident Ambassador to the Philippines could possibly visit early 2014.

7.Maritime Security

7.1. Both sides agreed to look into possible cooperation on maritime security that remains a significant mutual concern to Seychelles and the Philippines. In particular, maritime piracy was identified as an important matter on which experiences and expertise could be shared, especially as this poses a threat to the interests of both countries. Both delegations flagged the challenges that they also face in combating other transnational crimes and agreed to consider a future MoU which would formalize the sharing of experience and expertise in this field.

8. Education and Capacity Building

8.1. With regard to education and human resource development, Seychelles underscored its interest to receive training opportunities across various sectors. The Ministry of Education agreed to convey its specific needs in terms of trainings through diplomatic channels.

8.2. The Seychelles' National Human Resource Development Council (NHRDC) outlined to the Philippines side its various areas of prospective cooperation including the identification of potential universities in the Philippines and their requirements for accepting international students.

8.3. The Seychelles delegation also expressed its interest for its Ministry of Foreign Affairs to receive assistance from the Philippines in the training of its diplomats. The Philippine delegation informed the Seychelles side that the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of Foreign Affairs offers training programs for foreign diplomats. The specific training needs of the Seychelles Foreign Ministry will be conveyed to the Department of Foreign Affairs. A study tour on how Philippines has set up its various schools of diplomacy will also be organized early next year.

9. Environment and Renewable Energy

9.1. In acknowledging the vulnerabilities of both island nations to the effects of climate change and natural disasters, the Seychelles delegation highlighted the importance of working together with the Philippines in promoting and protecting the environment in the fight against climate change. Areas highlighted by Seychelles in regards to potential cooperation included meteorology and climate change, disaster risk reduction and early warning systems, The Philippines expressed willingness to welcome a study tour in the above mentioned fields from the Seychelles.

9.2. Both sides agreed to share information on their respective renewable energy regulatory frameworks and best practices for energy efficiency development.

10. Other Areas of Cooperation

10.1. The Blue Economy

The Seychelles side outlined its strong backing of the "blue economy" concept, and extended an invitation for the Philippines to participate in the Blue Economy Summit taking place in Abu Dhabi in January 2014.

10.2. Political Consultations

The Seychelles Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its interest in establishing a MoU with the Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs, aimed at establishing regular dialogue and consultations between their two ministries.

10.3. international Support

Both sides agreed to continue supporting one another across important international forums including the United Nations. The Seychelles side also informed the Philippines of its bid for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council 2017-18.

10.4. Consular Matters

The Seychelles side acknowledged that the Philippines is still searching for a suitable individual to fill the post of its Honorary Consul in Seychelles, and expressed its willingness to assist with this search.

11. Date and Venue of the 2nd Joint Committee Meeting

11.1.The Philippines expressed appreciation to Seychelles for hosting the 1st Joint Committee Meeting and the warm hospitality extended to the members of the delegation.

11.2. Both sides expressed their satisfaction with the successful deliberations of the Joint Committee Meeting and agreed to hold the next Joint Committee Meeting in the Philippines in 2015 at mutually convenient dates.

(Sgd.)
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Secretary of State
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Seychelles

(Sgd.)
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