

30 January 2013 – The U.S. Congressional Delegation (CODEL) headed by Representative Ed Royce (R-CA) supported the Philippines' move to pursue arbitration proceedings over the disputes in the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

The CODEL relayed this position to President Benigno S. Aquino III and other cabinet officials during a courtesy call in Malacañang today. Representative Royce is the new Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relation of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The CODEL visited the Philippines from January 28 to 30 as part of their visit to the region. They went to Seoul and Taiwan before going to Manila and then proceed to Beijing. Members of the CODEL were Representative Eliot Engel (D-NY), Representative Vern Buchanan (R-FL), Representative Tom Marino (R-PA), and Representative Matt Salmon (R-AR).

The CODEL said that the Philippines' legal track promotes the peaceful resolution to the dispute. The outcome of the proceeding would provide more stability and predictability in the region.

The delegation also expressed that they will convey back home that the U.S. should take a stronger stance in the West Philippine Sea dispute.

During the courtesy call, the President also highlighted that the fast rise of the Philippine economy was the result of his Administration's governance reforms.

The CODEL conveyed that they were enthusiastic about President Aquino's anti-corruption efforts and that their Filipino constituents in the U.S. were very hopeful of these reforms.

The focus of the Aquino Administration on upholding the rule of law creates a lot of economic opportunities for both Filipino and American investors said the CODEL. The Philippines and the U.S. should further deepen its trade and economic relations.

In addition, the CODEL acknowledged the progress achieved by the Philippine government on improving the human rights environment, particularly on the fight against extrajudicial executions and trafficking-in-persons. END