

14 February 2013 – Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario and newly-installed United States (U.S.) Secretary of State John Kerry have agreed to continue forging stronger and deeper relations between the Philippines and the United States. This understanding was reached between the two officials in a phone call made last night by Secretary Kerry to Secretary del Rosario.

“We spoke at length about our relations and the many opportunities we have to move them further forward. We agreed that as strategic partners with a long shared history and profound common values, it is important for both our nations to deepen our relations on all levels,” Secretary del Rosario said, adding that much of the discussion focused on a wide range of key, strategic initiatives, particularly in the area of security and defense.

Both officials agreed to further cooperation that would help build the capacity of the Philippines to defend its territory and people.

“We exchange views on the implementation of our agreed policy of increased rotational presence, enhanced exercises and capacity building,” Secretary del Rosario stated, adding that cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief is also an important part of this agreed policy.

On regional cooperation, both officials agreed to work together to build stronger ASEAN-U.S. relations.

“We agreed on the importance of working together in ASEAN to promote our mutual interests as well as regional cooperation,” the Secretary said. “We agreed that one area for this is the US initiative to train ASEAN seafarers and that the Philippines, given its recognized accomplishments in enhancing the skills of seafarers, can take the lead on this,” he added.

On the West Philippine Sea (WPS) issue, Secretary Kerry gave his support for the efforts of the Philippines to resolve the conflicting claims through the rule of law, particularly the United

Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The Secretary also thanked Secretary Kerry for focusing on the issue of the peaceful settlement of the West Philippine Sea when he was in the Senate.

“Secretary Kerry was a moving force behind a Senate resolution on the peaceful settlement of disputes in the West Philippine Sea,” the Secretary said.

“I discussed with Secretary Kerry our initiative of bringing the West Philippine Sea issue to arbitration under UNCLOS. I emphasized the importance of this initiative to the future stability of our region in particular and to the future efficacy of international law in general,” Secretary del Rosario said. The Secretary said that Secretary Kerry is fully supportive of UNCLOS and was one of its strongest advocates in the U.S. Senate.

During the phone call, Secretary Kerry emphasized his personal closeness to the Philippines and his determination to further enhancing bilateral relations. “Secretary Kerry was part of the election monitoring team headed by Senator Richard Lugar in 1986. Since then he has always had a keen interest in our country and our democracy,” the Secretary said.

There was also a discussion on the success of President Benigno S. Aquino III’s good governance, economic policies, fight against corruption and peace initiatives.

“Secretary Kerry expressed his highest regard for the leadership of President Aquino and his best wishes for our leadership and our people,” the Secretary said. END

