

6 February 2010-The Philippines and the European Union (EU) met in Manila from 4 to 5 February for the 4<sup>th</sup> round of negotiations on a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) that will serve as the general framework of relations between the Philippines and the EU.

As both sides expressed the desire to have a signing of the said Agreement at the earliest opportunity, technical discussions were held before the formal discussions, which resulted in the Parties agreeing in the areas of general principles of trade and investment, competition policy, and science and technology. During the actual negotiations, convergence was attained on combating illicit drugs, employment and social affairs, data protection, education, culture and intercultural and interfaith dialogue, development cooperation, statistics, and small arms and light weapons. The PCA will also elevate the relationship by increasing interaction at various levels, including government-to-government, business-to-business, and people-to-people exchanges.

Mr. James Moran, Director for Asia in the EC's External Relations Department, said "This fourth round of PCA negotiations has made a great deal of progress, reflecting the shared intention of both the EU and the Philippines to strengthen our relations through the intensified cooperation which the PCA will make possible."

For their part, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Enrique Manalo and Edsel Custodio expressed optimism that the RP-EU PCA would not only strengthen the traditional links between the Philippines and the EU but also enhance cooperation in various fields on the basis of mutual benefit.

Both parties resolved to continue working to reach convergence on the remaining articles at the next round of negotiations envisaged for March 2010 in Brussels. END