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Department of Foreign Affairs

General Carlos P. Romulo, one of the original signatories to the United Nations Charter and 4th President of the General Assembly once remarked “Let us make this floor the last battlefield,” when referring to the United Nations General Assembly. It was his fervent hope after surviving the carnage of the Second World War that disputes would be settled on the floor of the United Nations with statements and not bombs, through tacit diplomacy instead of force of arms. His hopes were dashed when three decades into the existence of the organization, conflicts continued to rage in various parts of the world.

General Romulo realized that something bold had to be done. This key action was the preparation of a draft declaration by the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization which met in Manila. The draft was prepared upon the initiative of Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Romania, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, and the Philippines and was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly by consensus on 15 November 1982 through resolution A/RES/37/10 known as the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes. Thirty years later, the General Assembly resolution entitled “Thirtieth Anniversary of the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes” will be adopted on 14 December 2012, proof positive of the continuing support of the international community for the Manila Declaration and the principles it represents.

The Philippine Government commemorates the 30th Anniversary of this landmark document which remains as relevant today as it did three decades ago. To quote General Romulo “The Manila Declaration is a beginning, not arrival at the destination.” Clearly given everything that is going on in the world today, we have not yet arrived at the destination envisioned by the Manila Declaration. The Declaration consolidates the legal framework of the peaceful settlement of international disputes, building upon and promoting general international law, particularly the UN Charter. It represents the first time that a comprehensive plan on the normative subject was adopted. The Declaration enshrines the Philippines’ commitment to its obligation to settle its

disputes by peaceful means and through the rule of law

The rule of law is the cornerstone of President Benigno S. Aquino III's programme of good governance. The strict implementation of the rule of law demonstrates the Philippine Government's commitment to carry out its responsibilities and obligations in a democratic environment.

In commemorating this landmark Declaration, the Philippines once again stresses the country's commitment to and efforts in promoting the rule of law in the conduct of international relations. This shows the Philippines' strong advocacy of the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts as embodied in the principles of the UN Charter.

The Manila Declaration reaffirms the peremptory character of the peaceful settlement of disputes vis-à-vis the prohibition against the use of force, in order to maintain international peace and security. It inspires us to find new ways to forge international cooperation and agreement to ensure that peremptory norms apply to all States, and thus encourages the progressive development of international law that RIGHT IS MIGHT when it comes to the conduct of international relations.

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of this milestone declaration, the UN issued a commemorative stamp, which I now have the honor to unveil before you.

Thank you and good morning.