

**JOINT DECLARATION  
ON  
AUSTRALIA – THE PHILIPPINES COMPREHENSIVE PARTNERSHIP**

*Guiding Principles*

1. Australia and the Philippines have built a strong and enduring relationship since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1946. Over the past 70 years, our friendship has developed into a mature and wide-ranging partnership, grounded in shared values of democracy, respect for human rights and adherence to the rule of law. Australia and the Philippines' long-standing trade and the continued expansion of our people-to-people links underpin our deepening bilateral relationship.

2. Australia and the Philippines recognise that the security and prosperity of both countries are linked to the stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Reaffirming their respect for national independence, sovereignty and adherence to the rule of law, Australia and the Philippines will work together in regional platforms to continue to develop architecture supportive of security, stability and cooperation, and to promote confidence-building measures to minimise the risk of conflict in the region.

3. In recognition of the increasing complexity and closeness of our bilateral cooperation, we have decided to elevate our relationship to a Comprehensive Partnership. This Comprehensive Partnership Joint Declaration highlights the enduring nature of the Australia-Philippines relationship and demonstrates our commitment to strengthen and expand our relationship in a manner that is mutually beneficial. It marks a transformative phase in the relationship and will serve as a guiding framework for all aspects of our bilateral relations.

4. Our ministers and senior officials will meet regularly, including through the biennial Philippines-Australia Ministerial Meeting (PAMM) to ensure that we are maximising the opportunities to advance cooperation between Australia and the Philippines, including trade, development assistance, defence, education, people-to-people linkages, counter-terrorism and countering transnational crime.

*Political Relations*

5. We will continue to work together to shape the future of the region and the broader global environment by supporting, reinforcing and strengthening regional institutions, particularly the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC) and the United Nations.

6. We will support ASEAN's goals and central role in fostering peace, stability and prosperity in the region recognising Australia's status as a Dialogue Partner for the past four decades and as an ASEAN Strategic Partner since November 2014.

7. Australia and the Philippines recognise the importance of ensuring security, safety and freedom of navigation and overflight at all times in accordance with international law. Both countries agree that disputes be resolved peacefully and without resorting to the threat or use of force and in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Both countries call on all parties to exercise restraint and refrain from unilateral actions that could increase tensions in the region. Both countries recognise the need for the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties and the early conclusion of Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

### *Economic Relations*

8. Australia and the Philippines commit to deepen and broaden bilateral trade and investment linkages and create the best possible conditions for business to flourish, as well as strengthen engagement in untapped areas of economic cooperation, including small and medium enterprises, for mutual benefit taking into consideration the common aspirations of inclusive growth and sustainable development. We will work together to cultivate a stronger enabling environment for bilateral trade, in accordance and consistent with the respective laws, rules and regulations of both countries.

9. Australia and the Philippines will cooperate in developing projects supporting women's economic empowerment.

10. Our two countries will cooperate to secure the successful implementation of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA) and the conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP).

### *Defence Cooperation*

11. Australia and the Philippines share common interests for peace and security in our region. We have strong and longstanding defence ties, underpinned by high level defence consultations, maritime security and counter-terrorism cooperation, participation in joint exercises. We will continue our defence forces' close engagement, and assist The Philippines in defence modernisation, including through bilateral and multilateral exercises, education and training, and maritime cooperation.

12. The strength of our defence cooperation is underlined by the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperative Defence Activities and the Status of Visiting Forces Agreement (SOVFA). Australia and the Philippines will enhance this cooperation by negotiating a mutual logistic support agreement.

### *Law and Justice Cooperation*

13. Australia and the Philippines reaffirm their commitment to strengthen cooperation on law and justice to respond effectively to issues which transcend geographic boundaries. Both countries will prioritise addressing shared challenges, including maritime security, counter-terrorism, transnational crime and people smuggling, and

support efforts to enhance child protection. Australia and the Philippines will enhance cooperation in law enforcement, intelligence sharing and capacity building in border security.

14. Australia and the Philippines will work to cooperate in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) initiatives.

#### *Education Cooperation*

15. Both countries commit to cooperate in the vocational education and training including through partnerships between our educational institutions, and through development cooperation and implementation of the New Colombo Plan.

#### *Development Cooperation*

16. Australia recognises the significant achievements of the Philippines in addressing social issues and building human capacity and its aspirations to further develop its economy and society through inclusive development.

17. Australia and the Philippines acknowledge that good governance, strong economic fundamentals, and quality education are requisites in attaining political stability and sustaining economic growth. Australia's cooperation will continue to align with the priorities of the Philippine Government including efforts to enhance the foundations for sustained economic growth, reform the education and governance sectors, improve the conditions for peace and security and collaborate in responding to humanitarian emergencies.

#### *Plan of Action*

18. The Philippines-Australia Ministerial Meeting (PAMM) will develop and implement an Action Plan to drive cooperation and engagement and ensure that both the potential and prospects of this Comprehensive Partnership are fully realised and achieved.

Signed in Manila on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of November 2015.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE  
THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**BENIGNO S. AQUINO III**  
President

**MALCOLM TURNBULL**  
Prime Minister