

SPEECH OF SECRETARY ARTHUR C. YAP
GOVERNMENT INCENTIVES: REGULATORY AND POLICY
PLATFORMS

CORAL TRIANGLE INITIATIVE (CTI) BUSINESS SUMMIT

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Greetings to the Representatives of the Coral Triangle Countries or the CT 6, organizers, business partners, friends and advocates of the Coral Triangle.

To friends from near and a-far, to first time and returning visitors, let me greet you all....MABUHAY! To the un-initiated, let me explain that the word: “Mabuhay” is more than a greeting. Mabuhay can be meant as a command, a wish, or a cheer. But however it is said, “Mabuhay” is an invocation to bestow the gift of a long life on someone who is dear.

What a fitting way then to begin the proceedings of the first ever Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) Business Summit, which the Philippines is proud to host. Fitting because it is a deep concern for life, its sustainability, and the distribution of all its blessings and bounty, which brought the CT6 countries together and move the CTI beyond words and promises.

The Coral Triangle is all about life and diversity. Home to a majority of the world’s known coral reefs and species, it is also home to more than 350 million inhabitants from 6 countries that border the Coral Triangle. The collapse of the triangle will not only mean the end to food security but to the

very livelihood for hundreds of millions of people.

Your presence here today, is clear proof and testament that you are very much aware of these realities for which reason we continue to be active partners of the CTI. Our partnership is growing stronger and potential partners have signified their interest and enthusiasm in becoming part of the Coral Triangle Initiative. In fact, last November, 2009, the Philippines formally endorsed the membership of Brunei Darussalam to the Second Ministerial Meeting held in the Solomon Islands. The Endorsement was welcomed and we await for favorable action on the same by the Ministers of the CT 6.

This must be in no small measure due to exciting innovations within the CT 6, which directly contribute to the dynamic partnerships between and among the public and private sectors many of whom are with us this afternoon.

Foremost among and at the core of these innovations is the CTI's framework which takes into account an Eco-Systems Management Approach. Whereas other regional management bodies merely focus on specific commodities, like tuna, turtles and other threatened species, the CTI looks at the entire eco-system in which these commodities live in. More importantly, the lives of coastal dwellers and the interests of food aggregators and processors are considered in the equation, which makes sustainability possible. Issues

about diversity, marine life, species protection, climate change, and food security, are discussed side by side with corporate profits, tourism, jobs,

livelihood, rural and fisher-folk income and public governance.

In support of the CTI Framework various incentive schemes have been created to encourage transformations and support new sustainable investments and growth.

PRIORITY SEASCAPES

In the Regional Plan of Action, Priority Seascapes are designated and established with complementary investment plans. To establish this, extensive consultations are provided for between government and the private sector wherein goals, key actions and, financial investments are identified. In the area of resource mobilization, provisions are made for joint-country efforts, which is at the heart of recognizing that the resources sought to be protected are trans-boundary in nature.

Embedded in the Philippine National Plan of Action is the management of the Verde Island Passage which is recognized to be, at the center, of the center of marine bio-diversity. As you are aware, the impairment or damage to the Verde Island Passage can mean the collapse of marine resources to the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Eco-Region that is bordered by Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. This Management Plan was completed with private sector, fishing and transport companies, and facilitated by Local Government Units, National Agencies, NGO's and PO's. Presently, the Plan is being implemented by five (5) Philippine Provincial Governments and include law enforcement, establishment of sanctuaries, extension, information dissemination and capacity building in coastal resource management.

Other Management Projects being implemented in the regional and local levels which are focusing on small pelagics like sardines and small tuna's

are the Sulu-Celebes Sustainable Fisheries Management Project and the Philippine-Brunei Consortium on Sardines Fisheries under the ambit of the BIMP-EAGA which bring together public and private sectors of both countries and expand investment opportunities.

ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES (EAFM)

In recognition of the fact that substantially all of the fisher-folk communities that border the Coral Triangle are substantially artisanal fisher-folk who survive on less than a dollar a day on average, the regional platform describes a new, collaborative Sustainable Coastal Fisheries and Poverty Reduction Initiative (COASTFISH) that aims to improve incomes, livelihoods and food security through strategies and programs that are supported by appropriate investments. Accordingly, each of the CT6 is encouraged to develop a COASTFISH Investment Plan.

Since 2001, the Philippines has already initiated projects and activities to enhance food security, incomes, and sustainable livelihoods of coastal communities through the promotion of mariculture parks, establishment of techno-demos of viable aquaculture technologies, and seaweeds farming. These projects will eventually become part of the overall design of the National COASTFISH Investment Plan. In fact, this year, our President, whose administration is to be credited with establishing our mariculture park program, just ordered the implementation of an additional 25 million US

dollars for new mariculture parks.

In an effort to address the sustainability of businesses and entities in the trade of fishery products, the CTI also aims to collaborate on a regional basis, in technology and information sharing, lessons learned and joint marketing of common products. In fact, in the Philippines, model companies who collaborate on these efforts are regularly showcased by the government and introduced to international buyers and markets. One of these companies is Luen Thai, and a local Philippine partner, who are signing an MOU on the production and sale of high-grade tuna sashimi to Korean tuna distributor WOORIRANCH FOOD BUSINESS CO., LTD. This supply agreement signing will be witnessed by the local Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council.

Still on the subject of information and technology sharing, CT6 governments are also encouraged to establish a more informal CTI Tuna Forum to promote multi-sectoral in-depth discussion of tuna governance in the CT region.

In the Philippines, we continue to hold dialogue with these groups to advance the implementation of good practices in the conservation and management of tuna stocks, in compliance with the management measures being imposed by other Regional Fisheries Management Bodies. The National Tuna Industry Council was also established, and became a government partner in bilateral and multilateral negotiations in the areas of tuna exploitation and management. A tuna management plan is also in place that sets regulations on mesh size, fish size limitation, and fleet capacity, among others.

Furthermore, the Philippine government is assisting the private sector in developing sustainable and better fishing practices. The Frabelle Fishing Corporation, Luen Thai and Sun Warm Fishing Corporation, three tuna fishing companies with a strong Philippine presence, have been using circle

hooks in their fishing operations that dramatically decreases the by-catch of sea turtles and other un-intended species which, increase their survivability when they caught. Extension programs for long-line fishing with circle hooks have been mainstreamed into the business and government partnership. This was announced this morning by the President. The use of circle hooks to catch tuna is boosted by the growing preference of consumers to buy products from companies that use dolphin-safe and turtle-free fishing devices. In fact, we are signing tomorrow an

Endorsement on the use of circle hooks in tuna fishing with fisher-folk representatives to disseminate extension efforts on the technology to local fishers in the Philippines.

To understand better tuna fisheries, the Philippine government, in addition to the National Stock Assessment Project, also participated in the Pacific-wide Tuna Tagging Program. The two projects improves the estimation of exploitation, mortality and growth rates of the yellow-fin tuna, big-eyed tuna and the skipjack. Other key strategies developed and implemented with the private sector involve the Philippines development of its own national Plan of Action to combat IUU fishing and the implementation of its own Vessel Monitoring System to gather data and other information on landings. Presently, the observer program is now in place to ensure that fishing operations conform with management measures on IUU Fishing.

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAs)

On Marine Protected Areas, the CTI strives to strike new ground not only in the creation of a national network of MPAs but a trans boundary network of MPA's throughout the Coral Triangle which are effectively managed. This is new ground and challenging in the sense that in many areas, communities are absent to provide support and management to the MPA.

In the Philippines, the MPAs system network is spearheaded by the UP Marine Science Institute, with national agencies, LGU's, NGO's and PO's as members. The UPMSI shepherds the conservation and protection activities of partners implementing the MPA system, which is also led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. There are about 1,000 MPAs in the Philippines and at most, only 30% of these are effectively managed which is a great challenge we face. One of the measures we have adopted involve open competitions biennially, supported by LGUs, for best managed MPA's which are regularly held with cash prizes given.

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION MEASURES

But of all the issues that need to be confronted urgently, it is the issue of Climate Change Adaptation that poses the greatest challenge. The Philippines is Exhibit A in the case to establish the fact that the CT 6 are not climate givers, but climate takers. On developing economies and small island states is unleashed the ferocity and brutality of climate change. The Regional Platform for threats and needs assessments, action-plans, capacity building, and the creation of a network of centers of excellence on climate change adaptation for marine and coastal environments will not be achieved unless the issue of funds mobilization is addressed. The issue of incentivizing, the issue of motivating the public and private sectors to shift into best practices of sustainability must be the concern, focus and result of this first-ever CTI Business Summit.

We are doing our part locally, by embarking on vulnerability studies of

coastal areas in Southern Luzon using GIS-based information and expanding

this to other crops, livestock and poultry nationwide. Even as the technology and funds exist, the project is in its infancy and will need greater financial and technical support for genuine impact.

THREATENED SPECIES STATUS IMPROVING

On the threatened species of the CTI, the regional focus on the identified cetaceans, turtles, groupers, wrasses and elasmobranchs will allow us to properly track our success or failure. Despite much work that needs to be done for completing the conservation plans for other identified threatened species, the Philippines has completed its National Plan of Action for Shark Conservation.

CONCLUSION

In the course of the next few days, I am buoyed by great hope that the regional and national initiatives presented here will be answered by resource mobilization, for counter-parting with government and private sector best practices. The CTI is a public-private partnership which compels us to take greater responsibility for our actions, compels us to become agents of change, and compels us to develop mutual trust and respect for other players in the Coral Triangle. It is incumbent upon the governments here present, to

provide the environment conducive for partnerships to prosper within the framework of adaptation, within the framework of diversity and sustainability,for the peoples of the Coral Triangle, for its dependents the world over, for sustaining life above and in the seas.... for ages to come...**MABUHAY!**