

**Statement
of
Hon. Enrique A. Manalo
Secretary for Foreign Affairs**

**on the
7th Anniversary of the Award on the South China Sea Arbitration
12 July 2023**

The Philippines today commemorates the 7th Anniversary of the Award on the South China Sea Arbitration. An affirmation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its dispute settlement mechanisms, the Award definitively settled the status of historic rights and maritime entitlements in the South China Sea and declared without legal effect claims that exceed entitlements geographical and substantive limits set by UNCLOS. It is now part of international law.

Anniversaries are markers reminding us of the trajectory we have taken as a nation and as a people. In the decision to file a case for arbitration, the Philippines opted to take the path of principle, the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of disputes. The Tribunal's decision affirmed the correctness of that course of action. The Award has since facilitated the plotting of new paths and trajectories, reflecting the rich maritime heritage of our country and our people, firm in the conviction that our rights over our maritime jurisdictions are indisputable.

We welcome the growing number of partners that have expressed support for the Award. We are honored that the Award stands as a beacon whose guiding light serves all nations. It is a settled landmark and a definitive contribution to the progressive development of international law. It is ours as much as it is the world's. Just as lighthouses aid vessels in navigating the seas, the Award will continue to illuminate the path for all who strive towards not just the peaceful resolution of disputes but also the maintenance of a rules-based international order.

We will continue to translate the positive outcomes of the Award into positive gains for our people to secure our legitimate interests in our maritime domain, and to promote peace, security and prosperity in our region. END