



HON. EDWARD S. HAGEDORN
Representative
Palawan, 3rd District
House of Representatives, Quezon City

Dear **Hon. Hagedorn**,

Isang makakalikasang pagbati!

This has reference to your House Bill entitled “*An Act declaring the three (3) nautical miles surrounding the Kalayaan Island Group and Scarborough Shoal in the West Philippine Sea as Marine Protected Area under Republic Act No. 7586 or the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 1992, as amended by Republic Act No. 11038, or the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 2018*”.

We are pleased to inform you that this Office strongly supports the proposal of establishing the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG) as a protected area. The coral reefs in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) cover an estimated area of 600 to 1,000 km², or about 30% of the total reef area of the Philippines, most of which are found within the KIG. The KIG is also a source of coral and fish larvae for neighbouring reef systems along the western Palawan coast to as far as the Sulu Sea and the Indo-China coast, hence, it also has an important role in the fishing industry and in providing food security. As such, several portions of the KIG, namely Pag-Asa Island and the eastern portion of it (which includes Ayungin Shoal, Bulig Shoal, Dalagang Bukid Shoal, Hopskin Reef, Hubo Reef, Kanduli Shoal, Lawak Island, Patag Island, Quirino Atoll, Raja Soliman Reef, and Sabina Shoal), were already proposed by our Department to be established as marine protected areas, taking into account the results of the biophysical assessments conducted during the several research expeditions by the DENR-BMB and University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI) from 2017 to 2022.

As regards our commitment on the provision of Technical Description for the island, reefs, shoals, atolls, and other marine features in the West Philippine Sea, please see attached map (Annex Proposed Protected Area Map Covering KIG).

Also attached is our position paper to your House Bill on the proposed establishment of KIG and Scarborough Shoal as protected area under the NIPAS (which was presented during the meeting of Committee on Natural Resources held on January 25, 2023), copy of the reports on Protected Area Suitability Assessment (PASA) for the proposed Pag-Asa Island Protected Landscape and Seascape and Eastern Kalayaan Protected Landscape and

Seascape conducted by the DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), as well as the Technical Description of Kalayaan Island Group.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,


FELIX S. MIRASOL, JR., CESO IV
OIC, Regional Executive Director

cc: Atty. Juan Miguel T. Cuna, *CESO I*
Undersecretary for Field Operations –
Luzon, Visayas and Environment

ASec. Gilbert C. Gonzales, *CESO III*
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