

Preface

This timely update and review of the National Marine Policy (NMP) of the Philippines is strategically crucial, coming at the important crossroad of our nation's archipelagic development. While the seminal works have started over 20 years ago, i.e., with the Cabinet Committee on Marine and Ocean Affairs (CABCOM-MOA) circa 1994, its urgency is highlighted by the fast-changing needs of our time. As exemplified in our Philippine-style participatory governance and policymaking, the team has travelled to the islands of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao holding consultation workshops, engaging key stakeholders and experts, and distilling a comprehensive framework of policy imperatives from its groundwork.

The NMP is drawn from a series of gap analyses on the root causes of our fragmented governance, tying together the socio-ecological institutional systems that are combined with the cultures of island communities. These are woven into the strategic imperatives elucidated in the four pillars of the NMP and its desired outcomes as outlined in: a) marine politics and jurisdiction with its defined baselines and the award of the Benham seamount; b) marine regulation and enforcement in strategically implementing national programs and securing its borders; c) marine development and conservation such as the maritime industry and energy development and sustainable fisheries balanced with local and national marine protected areas governance; and d) marine security in the face of ascendant China and the US Pacific pivot. These crosscutting areas are also tied together in the quest towards building resilient communities, the imperatives to act now in meeting the demands of climate change and a rapidly changing world.

A clear road map is required for the future to capture the imagination of our nation, the NMP presents a framework for a common vision for what appears to be fragmented archipelagos of socio-ecological systems. These are opportunities of islands hope for our country to chart our course, bounded by our maritime byways, anchored on sustaining community based efforts that develops into a strong inclusive "blue" economy. It will be through our individual and collective responsibilities that we are committed to be the brave stewards of these seas that bind us to our common future.

Our journey of over a thousand miles would not have been possible without the valuable contributions of countless partners as documented in the appendices and those undocumented. They have made the travel all worthwhile.

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