

**Welcome Remarks by Secretary Nasser C. Pangandaman,
Department of Agrarian Reform at the National Dialogue on Access
to Land and Rural Development, Richville Hotel, EDSA,
Mandaluyong City, 21 November 2008**

Most Reverend Archbishop Tony Ledesma, Rev. Bishop Broderick Pabillo, auxiliary Bishop of Manila, Rev. Francis Lucas, Chairperson of the Board, Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC), Dr. Nasreen Khundker, Research Director of the Center for Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Mr. Carlos Abad Santos, Executive Director of the Asia Pacific Policy Center, distinguished participants from the different sectors, the civil society, CARP implementing agencies, our donor development partners, my colleagues in DAR, friends from the media, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning!

I would like to welcome all of you in this National Dialogue on Access to Land and Rural Development in the Philippines. This National Dialogue is a tripartite undertaking of CIRDAP, DAR and ANGOC, which is very timely and important in the light of the present deliberation of the House of Representatives and the Senate of the proposed extension of the Philippine Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

This National Dialogue will present the country study initiated by CIRDAP, with assistance from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The study is focused on "Knowledge Generation and Policy Dialogue on Access to Land and other Natural Resources by the Rural Poor in four Asian Countries. The study includes Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines in the Asia and Pacific Region. The

study aims to look at issues which determine improving access to land and other natural resources including common property resources and tenurial status by the rural poor people, particularly women and indigenous groups and to create a database collating existing information.

It is important to understand that this study is part of the follow-up actions of CIRDP Member countries in the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development [ICARRD] held in Puerto Alegre, Brazil in March 2005. The ICARRD Final Declaration states that, "Land and other natural resources are not only economic assets but also cultural, social and historical assets. Therefore, there is a need to address them in an integrated and territorial way through negotiation, dialogue and participatory approaches."

The necessity of building up a comprehensive, dynamic understanding and information on access to land and other natural resources pre-determines the quality of policy information that would significantly influence the direction in promoting social justice that shall put the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) No. 1- Eradication of Poverty & Hunger work best for the welfare of the rural poor across different developing nations.

As a critical follow-up action on ICARRD and in consonance with the recent FAO's call for Consortium in building up the Land Tenure Information, we commend the contextualization of the study in the four countries done by Dr. Khundker, the presentation of Mr. Abad Santos today on land access and rural development, presentation of Mr. Don

Marquez of the LandWatch Strategy Statement and the result of the sectoral workshop yesterday.

Providing the mechanisms to strengthen and widen development partnerships would enhance support in achieving the MDGs and poverty reduction initiatives in the Asian countries. This could also facilitate in sustaining the tradition of peaceful dialogues in pursuing the enduring aspirations of agrarian reform and rural development. Making land and other resources accessible to the poor and building a dynamic information system that provides a relevant database on access to land and other natural resources would likewise improve institutional effectiveness.

Transforming agrarian systems to work for the poor is a perennial global aspiration. Agrarian reform as a fundamental vehicle towards rural development remains to be the best strategy in addressing poverty and hunger. While there are already champions in agrarian reform, there is still a slackening platform by which to synthesize, share, and learn from different countries about the best practices in evolving a sound M & E on access to land and other natural resources, and therefore, no sufficient reliable regional based-information.

Utilization of land and other resources proved to be the most critical area for policy decisions in many countries across the globe. How they do it, what information and technology infrastructure used, how they manage, and how to respond to the growing demands for a results-based management of development policies are the basic knowledge that are equally worth generating apart from the substantive research

variables to be found in building the database on land tenure information.

The operationalization of these concerns at the regional, national, local levels poses as elusive and requires being time-bounded to catch up with the competing issues between the MDGs timeline and the fast deteriorating physical environment, societal peace & food securities. In not so simplistic attribution but rather a straightforward assertion that the multi-faceted nature of development appears to be all literally standing on land and other natural resources.

Thus, the call for consortium to evolve relevant and reliable land tenure information. We do appreciate the support of the ANGOC and the International Land Coalition-Asia to DAR in seeking for the perfecting mechanisms in pursuing the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program as a critical requirement in rural development.

I hope that this National Dialogue will generate recommendations and action points to pursue land and water access and tenure security. I also pray that one of the agreements in this National Dialogue is to provide unwavering support for the extension of CARP. I would like to thank all of you for attending this workshop despite your busy schedule.

Welcome once again to this important national policy dialogue.