

# **STATEMENT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ITU ABA IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ARBITRATION**

**By Amb. Albert Del Rosario  
Chair, Stratbase ADR Institute  
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**We would like to state on record that we fully agree with Justice Antonio Carpio's observations on the importance of the issue of Itu Aba in the South China Sea Arbitration and the fact that, during the pendency of the Arbitration, we did our best to guard against efforts to suppress the issue of Itu Aba—which would have undermined the Philippine case.**

**We also confirm the observations of the Philippine lead counsel, Paul Reichler, and Justice Carpio that former Solicitor General Florin Hilbay's "statement that the lawyers wanted to discuss joint development in our response to the Tribunal's questions about Itu Aba is a complete fabrication."**

**We were personally present during the meeting on November 2015 in The Hague where Mr. Hilbay issued the instruction not to answer any of the Tribunal's questions on the status of Itu Aba. As Secretary of Foreign Affairs, we had to take a strong position to rescind this instruction that is detrimental to the Philippine case in the South China Sea Arbitration.**

**We thank Justice Carpio, Paul Reichler and the international team of lawyers for their indispensable role in winning the Award dated July 12, 2016.**

**Finally, we will forever be grateful to former President Benigno Aquino III for making the principled and courageous decision to sue China before an international tribunal to defend the rights of his countrymen under international law. END**