Remarks of Hon. Patrick A. Chuasoto, Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.
Jones Act Anniversary Dinner
Philippine Embassy, Washington D.C.
30 August 2016

Rep. Robert "Bobby" Scott (TBC), Congressman, Virginia's Third Congressional District;
Mr. W. Patrick Murphy, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Southeast Asia, U.S. Department of State;
Ambassador Maisto, President of the US PH Society, and his wife Nini;
Members of the Jones Family led by his granddaughter Elizabeth;
Professor Erwin Tiongson and his wife Titchie, who will be our resource persons tonight,
Directors and Members of the US PH Society;
Mr Hank Hendrikson, Executive Director, and his wife Ambassador Derse;
Fellow Filipinos, friends of the Philippines,

It is my honour to welcome you tonight to the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines. As you all know, we are gathered to commemorate a historic and momentous dinner that took place in this city, at a hotel not too far from here, one hundred years ago last night.

Friends, ladies and gentlemen, yesterday was a milestone in the history of the Philippines as a nation, and of Filipinos as a people.

"Milestones," as we understand it, are significant events or stages in life. The term originated from stone markers set up on roadsides to mark the distance in miles to a particular geographical point. Even from its original use though, as a reference point for physical distance, we readily also see that "milestones" connote progress, moving forward, development.

The passing of one hundred years is a milestone of great importance; we even have a word for it: centennial. It often involves the enjoyment by a different generation, now far removed in time and circumstance, of the fruits of labor of another, several generations up the line. Yesterday, August 29, 2016, we commemorated one such milestone with the enactment one hundred years ago of the Philippine Autonomy Act of 1916 by the 64th Congress of the United States of America.

Just as a father encourages an infant son to take his first steps in life, the Jones Law, as it was commonly referred to, laid down the framework for a more autonomous government, preparatory to the grant of independence to the Philippines by the United States. Through this law, the Philippines saw the creation of a bicameral legislature, the introduction of a representative electoral process, and the recognition of the fundamental civil and political rights of persons living within the bounds of the Philippine Islands.

One hundred years ago, thus, the United States, working with our Filipino forefathers, laid down this legislative milestone that defined the parameters and boundaries of government of our then still emerging nation. In the years since our independence, the Philippines has, on different occasions, redefined these parameters and boundaries. Many of the institutions and democratic processes and exercises of the present day Philippines can be traced back and reckoned from the milestone that was the Jones Law. Adapted to suit Philippine culture, temperaments and even sometimes specific personalities, these modern day institutions, processes and exercises nonetheless remain faithful to the enduring tenets and principles of the Jones Law.

As with many milestones, it is only in looking back at that initial stone marker of an act of the US Congress in 1916 that its significance and value can be fully understood. The Embassy is, therefore, very thankful and honoured to be able to host this commemorative dinner tonight. We appreciate our continuing partnership with the US-Philippines Society in ensuring that the friendship between the Philippines and the United States endures well into the next one hundred years. We are happy to welcome to the embassy the descendants of Congressman Jones, whose vision of and commitment to a free and independent Philippines my people will always be thankful for. We also salute Titchie and Erwin Tiongson who have tirelessly committed themselves to helping Filipinos better understand the Philippine-US alliance, partnership, and friendship. And, of course, maraming, maraming salamat to all of you, who we will always count as genuine patriots and true friends of the Philippines.

Finally, let me end by saying that it is also in looking back, seeing how far the Philippines has come, that insights can be drawn for forging ahead into the future. We will endure, will not waver, and we will toil as those who came before us did, in fighting for democracy, for freedom, for prosperity, for social justice. As a people with a deep sense of nostalgia, Filipinos will ever be mindful of the hard work of our forefathers that have taken us to where we are today in 2016. And we shall do what we can to protect and safeguard it with honour.

Thank you very much.