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INECE EPC Member Representing Plaintiffs before The Philippines Supreme Court in Unprecedented Pollution Case Against Philippine Government

Washington, D.C., 13 August 2008 – Antonio Oposa Jr., respected litigator and Executive Planning Committee member for the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (INECE), presented an oral argument on Tuesday, 12 August, calling for an unprecedented ruling in The Philippines: to request that The Philippine Supreme Court monitor the implementation of an Action Plan by the Government to clean up the excessively polluted Manila Bay.

The lawsuit was originally brought to the Regular Trial Court of Cavite in 1999 by concerned residents of Manila Bay and law students at the University of the Philippines, who targeted 12 government agencies, including: the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources, Interior and Local Government, Health, Budget, Education, Philippine National Police, and the Coast Guard, among others. The petition called for the Government to develop and implement a detailed Action Plan to clean up the Bay.

After several appeals by the Government, the case is now before the Supreme Court. While the Government has complied with a previous decision by preparing a 25-year Action Plan, the new request by petitioners for Court oversight is something that was unheard of until now. A successful ruling in this case would ensure that, regardless of changes in the Government administration, the Action Plan will continue to be implemented under the surveillance of the Supreme Court.

“A ruling in favor of the people of Manila will mark a milestone in Philippine environmental law,” said Durwood Zaelke, Director of INECE. “This will close the government loophole and ensure that environment continues to be a central focus, which is crucial for improving the health and livelihood of local citizens.”

Mr. Oposa is known for his involvement in the historic “Inter-Generational Responsibility” case in 1990 where he helped represent 40 youth in their fight to convince the Philippine Supreme Court to implement the principle of inter-generational responsibility, ensuring that today’s generations will protect the environment for future ones.

“The people of Manila Bay deserve to live in a clean environment and the Supreme Court has the power to make this a reality,” said Mr. Oposa. “This is the only way that we can make sure that the government does not shy from its environmental responsibilities.”

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The International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement links the environmental compliance and enforcement efforts of more than 4,000 practitioners - inspectors, prosecutors, regulators, parliamentarians, judges, and NGOs - from 150 countries, through training and capacity building programs, raising awareness, and enhancing enforcement cooperation. To learn more about INECE, please visit <http://inece.org/>.