EXPLANATORY NOTE

The municipalities of San Mariano and Palanan, Province of Isabela, host an array of high-potential ecotourism attractions on either side of the majestic Sierra Madre Mountains, within a single day’s drive from Metro Manila.

The Municipality of San Mariano is home to a pristine system of virgin waterfalls, forest areas for hiking, swimming, camping and other sports, and even a crocodile conservation sanctuary. The San Mariano Rearing Station in Barangay Minanga and the Philippine Crocodile Conservation Center at the ISU-San Mariano Campus are jump-off points to a distinctive wildlife and nature thrill that offers total eco-tourism experience. The amazing circuit of pristine waterfalls notably, the Amisan Falls in Barangay Del Pilar, Minangaon Falls, Disusuan Falls and Cadalan Falls showcases an array of well-preserved attractions teeming with rare flora and fauna. Barangay Marannao has a small water impounding area perfect for water sports and lake cruising.

Meanwhile, the Pacific Ocean-facing Municipality of Palanan is home to one of the longest and widest stretches of white sand beach found in Luzon. Due to poor infrastructure, the rest of the nation is deprived of access to its enchanting Blue Lagoon and pristine white beaches, notably Dicotocatan and Didagungan. The Kanasanggyan Creek and Cave, Digoyo Lake and Disadsad Falls accent the surrounding rainforests and the protected marine resources with a magical and unforgettable charm. For extreme adventure with a historical twist, the Aguinaldo Trail which traverses San Mariano and Palanan could be developed as a trail sports route which also commemorates a significant moment in Philippine history.

Despite their great potential, however, these tourism attractions are severely underdeveloped due to lack of attention and low levels of investment from the national government and private stakeholders. While it is true that more
infrastructure projects have been recently allocated to improve access to Palanan, it is still a paltry sum of the needed investment to transform the San Mariano-Palanan zone into a vaunted self-sustaining ecotourism corridor. This is also a decisive step towards the actual and inevitable future of the District. Just as we are extending resources to tap the ecotourism potentials of our rainforests and hidden shores, the cultivation of the San Mariano-Palanan ecotourism corridor has found its due time.

This legislation seeks to break this cycle of inattention and outright neglect by declaring the municipalities of San Mariano and Palanan, respectively, as a single unified Ecotourism Zone using the nomenclature of existing tourism laws and regulations. Our hope is that the clear mandate of this bill, if passed into law, will push the national government to prioritize the development of much-needed tourism infrastructure in these areas. This is timelier than ever considering the Department of Tourism’s re-orientation towards domestic tourism promotion in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It cannot be overemphasized that the development of San Mariano and Palanan as an ecotourism corridor will serve to jumpstart the local economy, generate jobs, and provide livelihood to families who are still suffering under the pandemic. As such, I respectfully solicit your support for the swift passage of this legislation.

[Signature]

ED CHRISTOPHER S. GO
Representative
2nd District of Isabela
Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7860

Introduced by Representative ED CHRISTOPHER S. GO

AN ACT DECLARING THE MUNICIPALITIES OF SAN MARIANO AND PALANAN IN THE PROVINCE OF ISABELA AS AN ECOTOURISM ZONE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Short Title – This Act shall be known as the “San Mariano-Palanan Ecotourism Corridor Act”.

SECTION 2. Declaring the Municipalities of San Mariano and Palanan, Isabela as Ecotourism Zone – The Municipalities of San Mariano and Palanan, Province of Isabela are hereby declared an Ecotourism Zone, to be known officially as the San Mariano-Palanan Ecotourism Corridor. The identification, validation, planning, funding, implementation, and completion of all infrastructure projects contributing to the development of the tourism capacity of the municipalities and their ecotourism attractions shall be prioritized by the Department of Tourism and its attached agencies.

SECTION 3. San Mariano-Palanan Road – The Department of Tourism in cooperation with the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority and the Department of Public Works and Highways shall prioritize the construction and concreting of the San Mariano-Palanan Road so that the entirety of the portion of road connecting the two municipalities comprising the Ecotourism Zone shall be passable to light vehicles for tourism purposes.

SECTION 4. San Mariano-Palanan Tourism Development Plan – The Department of Tourism, in coordination with the Tourism Infrastructure and
Enterprise Zone Authority and other concerned government agencies as may be identified by the DOT, shall prepare and complete a Tourism Development Plan for the synchronized development of the San Mariano and Palanan ecotourism zones, detailing among others all requirements for the construction, installation, and maintenance of appropriate facilities and infrastructure which shall enhance tourism in the area while preserving the natural beauty of the area.

SECTION 5. Implementation – Within 60 days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Tourism shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act. The Secretary of Tourism shall also take immediate steps to implement the Tourism Development Plan and incorporate the same in the overall Tourism Development Program of the Department for the ensuing fiscal year.

SECTION 6. Appropriations – The amount needed for the immediate implementation of this Act is hereby appropriated from any available funds in the National Treasury not otherwise obligated. The amount needed for the continuing implementation of this Act in succeeding fiscal years shall be included in the annual General Appropriation Act.

SECTION 7. Repealing Clause – All laws, decrees, executive orders, letters of instructions, rules and regulations, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with this Act are deemed repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 8. Separability Clause – If any provision of this act is judicially declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions of this Act not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 9. Effectivity Clause – This act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in two (2) newspaper of general circulation.
Approved,