Executive Order No. 263

adopting community-based forest management as the national strategy to ensure the sustainable development of the country's forest lands resources and providing mechanisms for its implementation

WHEREAS, Article II, Section 16 of the 1987 Constitution provides for the protection and advancement of the right of the Filipino people, both men and women, to a healthful and balanced ecology;

WHEREAS, Article II, Section 10 provides for the promotion of social justice to all citizens in all phases of national development;

WHEREAS, Article XIV, Section 17 mandates the State to recognize and respect the rights of the indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains and consider their customs, traditions and beliefs in the formulation of laws and policies;

WHEREAS, Executive Order No. 192, series of 1987, mandates the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as the primary government agency responsible for the sustainable management and development of the country's natural resources;

WHEREAS, the Philippines 2000 and the government's Social Reform Agenda support people empowerment and the full, meaningful and indispensable participation of communities as immediate stakeholders of the forest lands resources in the protection and management of the forest ecosystem;

WHEREAS, the 25-year Master Plan for Forestry Development also recognizes the indispensable role of local communities in forest protection, rehabilitation, development and management, and targets the protection, rehabilitation, management, and utilization of at leas 4 million hectares of forest lands, through the community-based forest management strategy;

WHEREAS, entrusting the responsibility for forest rehabilitation, protection, and conservation to the community of stakeholders and affording them equitable access to the forest and coastal resources are viable forest land management strategies as borne by the experience of the DENR and various supporting agencies;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, FIDEL V. RAMOS, President of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, do hereby order that:

SECTION 1. Community-based forest management (herein referred to as CBFM) shall be national strategy to achieve sustainable forestry and social justice.

SEC. 2 The DENR, through its Community and Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Offices, in coordination with the local government units and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) shall, at all times, take into account the needs and aspirations of local communities whose livelihood depends on the forest lands.

SEC. 3 Participating organized communities may be granted access to the forest land resources under long term tenurial agreements, provided they employ environment-friendly, ecologically-sustainable, and labor-intensive harvesting methods. Such harvesting methods shall be mentioned under a site-specific management plan of each recipient community and duly approved by the DENR.

SEC. 4. The indigenous peoples may participate in the implementation of CBFM activities in recognition of their rights to their ancestral domains and land rights and claims.

SEC. 5. A CBFM Steering Committee shall be created immediately and headed by the DENR with members fro the Departments of Agriculture, Trade and Industry, Agrarian Reform, Finance, Science and Technology, Labor and Employment, Interior and Local Government, Budget and Management, National Defense and Justice; National Economic Development authority: Philippine Commission on Countrywide Development under the Office of the President, Committee on Flagship Programs and Projects of the Office of the President' Presidential Management Staff under the Office of the President; Cooperative Development Authority, and Offices of Northern and Southern Cultural Communities. The Committee may invite representatives from the Philippine Chamber of Commerce, Philippine Wood Products Association, NGO coalition groups, and other public and private organizations to become members of the steering Committee. The Committee shall formulate and develop policy guidelines that will create incentives and conditions necessary to effectively carry out community-based forest management strategy. Accordingly, members of the CBFM Steering Committee should, at least, be represented by concerned Assistant Secretaries or heads of bureaus and agencies.

SEC. 6. The DENR shall work with local governments, people's organizations (POs), non-government organizations (NGOs), religious groups, business and industry, and other concerned organizations to ensure that communities are empowered to initiate and achieve the objectives of this Order.

SEC. 7 In its budget preparation, the DENR shall allot adequate funds to effectively accomplish CBFM targets and shall seek supplementary funding from local and foreign supporting agencies and organizations. DENR shall also ensure the inclusion of budgetary allocation for CBFM n the annual General Appropriations Act, pending the passage of the revised Forestry Code.

SEC. 8 The DENR shall establish a Community-based Forest Management Special Account (CBFMSA) to support the implementation of the strategy and provide financial and professional incentive system for deserving communities and government personnel.

SEC. 9 The DENR may source local and international grants and donations for the establishment of the CBFM Special Account. Other sources of fund may be determined by the CBFM Steering Committee subject to existing government regulations.

SEC. 10. The DENR shall support and set up jointly with relevant colleges and universities private and public organizations, arrangements for a community forestry training program for members of participating units, such as people's organizations, non-government organizations, local government units and other Within six months after the signing of this Order, the DENR, in consultation with government financial institutions such as the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), GSIS and the SSS, shall effect the creation of favorable financing mechanisms for access by communities and organizations in the pursuit of the CBFM strategy and its sub-strategies such as community training and empowerment, enterprise development, agroforestry development, tree plantations and other non-forest-based alternative livelihood systems.

SEC. 12. The DENR Secretary shall issue new rules, regulations, procedures, and guidelines necessary to implement this Order and repeal or modify existing ones consistent with the policies set forth by the CBFM Steering Committee.

SEC. 13. The DENR Secretary shall, within six months from the signing of this Order, submit to the Office of the President, a National Comprehensive Community Forestry Action Plan, which embodies the Department's short, medium and long-term plans. The action plan shall be discussed and approved by the CBFM Steering Committee prior to its submission to the President.

SEC. 14. All previous executive and administrative issuances which are inconsistent herewith are repealed or amended accordingly.

Done in the City of Manila, this 19th day of July, in the year of Our Lord, nineteen hundred and ninety-five.

(Sgd.) FIDEL V. RAMOS
President of the Philippines

By the President"
(Sgd.) Ruben D. Torres
Executive Secretary