

[PROCLAMATION NO. 1696, December 24, 2008]

DECLARING THE YEAR 2009 AS THE YEAR OF BALER TO MARK THE QUADRICENTENNIAL FOUNDATION OF THE TOWN OF BALER, PROVINCE OF AURORA AND DIRECTING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS TO LEAD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE OCCASION

WHEREAS, the year 2009 marks the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the town of Baler, Province of Aurora, having been established as a mission by Franciscan missionaries headed by Fr. Blas Palomino;

WHEREAS, in the Province of Aurora, Baler became the capital of the Distrito del Principe, created in 1856 from the land belonging to the province of Nueva Ecija;

WHEREAS, it was in Baler where Spanish soldiers made the last defense of Spanish authority in the Philippines whose gallantry moved General Emilio Aguinaldo to issue a decree on June 30, 1899, stating that Baler's defenders shall be considered and treated "not prisoners but as friends";

WHEREAS, it was in Baler where friendship and reconciliation was forged between the Philippines and Spain which provided the basis for the enactment of Republic Act No. 9187 declaring June 30, of every year as "Philippine-Spanish Friendship Day";

WHEREAS, there is a necessity to recognize the role of Baler in Philippine history and national development and to mark this momentous year with fitting commemorative activities promoting the diverse manifestation of Baler's wealth of heritage, habitat, history, language, artistic expression and creative industry related to collaborative programs with Hispanic heritage-linked countries.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO, President of the Republic of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, do hereby declare:

SECTION No. 1. The year 2009 is hereby declared as: "**The Year of Baler**", to mark the quadricentennial foundation of the town of Baler, Province of Aurora.

SECTION No. 2. There shall be a National Organizing Committee, to be headed by the Executive Director of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), as the lead agency in the planning, coordination and implementation of the program of activities and events in commemoration of the quadricentennial foundation of the Town of Baler in 2009.

SECTION No. 3. The National Organizing Committee shall be composed of the NCCA, as lead agency, Department of Education, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Agriculture, Department of Tourism as members; and representative