

RP HANDS OVER INTL MIGRATION FORUM CHAIRMANSHIP TO GREECE



Ambassador Rigoberto D. Tiglao is shown with DFA Undersecretary Esteban Conejos, Greek Interior Deputy Minister Athanassios Nakos, and International Organization for Migration (IOM) Director-General William Lacy Swing following the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Philippines, host of last year's Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), and the IOM held on 15 December 2008 in Athens.

Last 16 December 2008, Philippine Ambassador to Greece Rigoberto Tiglao graced the Philippines' official turnover of its chairmanship of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) to the Hellenic Republic. DFA OUMWA Undersecretary Esteban Conejos, Chair of the Second Meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), handed over the chairmanship to Greece.

The two previous meetings were held in Belgium and the Philippines in 2007 and 2008, respectively. The Third GFMD Meeting will be held in Athens from 2 to 5 November 2009.

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OVERSEAS ABSENTEE VOTERS (OAV) REGISTRATION TO BEGIN FEB 2009

The Commission on Elections announced that the registration period for overseas absentee voters starts 01 February 2009, and will end on 31 August 2009.

The Philippine Embassy urges all our *kababayans* residing in Greece, who are at least eighteen (18) years of age on the day of election and are not disqualified by law, to register as overseas absentee voters beginning February 1, 2009.

Voting period for the May 10, 2010 National Elections will be held from 10 April 2010 until 10 May 2010, 3:00 P.M. (Philippine time).

For inquiries about the OAV Registration, you may call the Embassy trunk line 210.6721.837 and 210.6721.883 extension nos. 101, 102 and 111.

NEW OFFICE HOURS AT THE EMBASSY'S CONSULAR SECTION

The Philippine Embassy will implement a new schedule of consular services beginning 01 February 2009 to better serve our *kababayans* in Greece and Cyprus.

The Embassy's consular section will be CLOSED to the public on WEDNESDAYS to ensure that there are no delays in the release of all notarial documents and certifications, and in the transmission of all passport applications to Manila.

The consular section will be open to the public from 9:00 AM-12:30 PM and 1:30 PM-5:00 PM every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

The Embassy will continue to render consular services every second Sunday of the month from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

For inquiries, you may call 210.6721.837 and 210.6721.883 ext. nos. 112, 116 and the Embassy's emergency no. 6979682921.

MADAME GETSY TIGLAO SPEARHEADS EMBASSY'S CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

By: Maj. Yoko Ramos-Vingno

The **Women's International Club of Athens (WIC)** selected the Philippines to make a presentation of the different varieties of Philippine dishes -- the Filipino cuisine which was held at the **Ambassador's residence last November 27, 2008**. This is the second time this year that the WIC has requested the Philippines to make a cultural presentation. The first one of which, **"Meet my Country"** was held last April at the Philippine embassy.

The **Women's International Club of Athens (WIC)** is a prestigious international club which has chapters all over the world and its members are from the elite Greek society, wives of ambassadors and lady members of the diplomatic corps.

The Ethnic cooking session, as the event was called is one of the many activities of

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MADAME GETSY TIGLAO

(Continued from page 1)

the WIC of which the idea is to learn the different cuisines, style of cooking and the type of food of each foreign member. Like the "Meet my Country", playing host to the event is the wife of Ambassador Rigoberto D. Tiglao, Mme Getsy S. Tiglao. She has been a member of the WIC and of the Ethnic cooking circle since two years ago.

Mme Getsy Tiglao presented the event with highlights of Filipino hospitality and atmosphere of Philippine fiesta for the ladies to feel the typical ambiance of Philippine setting that exemplifies and portrays our country's tradition. Philippine paintings depicting harvest and other local scenes by Filipino painters mounted on the walls of the residence accentuated the Filipino flavor of the occasion.

Before the cooking demonstration, Mme Tiglao made a short introduction about Philippine cuisine: *"Many people have asked me what Philippine food is. I say that Philippine food is the original fusion cuisine as it blends the best of the East and West. The overriding elements are the indigenous or Malay base, the Chinese and Spanish. The influences of all these foreign cultures, combined with our own indigenous cooking style and traditions have resulted in a uniquely our own, and one of the world's best cuisines."* The roster of Pinoy fiesta dishes that was presented for cooking demonstration were Sinigang

na Salmon, Chicken Adobo, Lumpia and Pancit Canton.

The ladies were treated to an authentic taste of Filipino cuisine for lunch. They started off with the comforting hot soup of *Sinigang na Salmon* followed by the main entrée *Chicken Adobo, Pancit Bihon, Lumpiang Shanghai, Crab Relleno, Tsipoura Escabeche* and culminating in the dessert: *Maja Blanca* and *Leche Flan. Mango and Pineapple* juices were served for drinks.

The WIC ladies had a wonderful time and enjoyed themselves. In her toast remarks, Ms Bridget Coscoros, current president of the WIC, said, *"Thank you very much for your charming hospitality today, clearly enjoyed by everyone. Congratulations to you."*

In response, Mme Tiglao thanked everyone who attended saying, *"This is truly a memorable and meaningful gathering which you and the Club allowed us to give you a glimpse of what Filipino Cuisine is – and in the process give you an experience of what Filipino hospitality is all about."*

This event, the Philippines once again through the efforts of Mme Getsy Tiglao, was able to host and launch a successful cultural experience that would no doubt contribute to the further enhancement of our image in Greece. ■

Maj. Yoko Ramos-Vingno, wife of Minister and Consul General Constancio Vingno Jr., is a reserve officer of the Philippine Army. She is a freelance writer.

Photos: Byron Villanueva



Mrs. Getsy Tiglao demonstrates how to cook Chicken adobo. Looking on from left are Mrs. Fely Garcia, Mrs. Yoko Ramos-Vingno, and Mrs. Marichu Britteon. (Below) WIC members eagerly watch the cooking demonstration.



(Top) Mrs. Tiglao teaches fellow WIC-members how to cook pancit, the Filipino-way. (Below) A WIC member tastes the pancit.



Left photo shows Madame Getsy Tiglao (center) and WIC members.

RP HANDS OVER GFMD PRESIDENCY

(Continued from page 1)

In his hand-over speech, Undersecretary Conejos said that the Manila GFMD was “another big milestone on an ever widening and lengthening road towards better understanding and addressing the links between migration and development.”

With more than 1130 delegates participants representing some 163 Member States and Observers of the United Nations, 33 international organizations and 220 participants in the Civil Society meeting, the Manila GFMD is the first in Asia and the largest conference on migration and development outside the UN system, gathering a distinguished assembly of policy makers and experts on migration and development from all world regions.

After two meetings in Brussels and Manila, the GFMD established its credentials as a voluntary, informal and government-led process that continually advances understanding and cooperation, and fosters practical and action-oriented outcomes on the mutually reinforcing relationship between migration and development. Its informality and interactive focus on concrete and cooperative solutions to today's challenges sets it apart from other, more formal processes that can tend to get stuck on points of doctrine or form.

The Philippine GFMD focused on the human face of migration with its central theme, “Protecting and Empowering Migrants for Development.” Drawing from its hard-



The Philippines, represented by Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Esteban Conejos, turns over chairmanship of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) to the Hellenic Republic, host of this year's GFMD meeting, on 16 December 2008 in Athens.

won experiences (both good and bad) of more than 30 years in protecting and supporting its expatriate workers, the Philippines showcased its “life-cycle” approach to protecting migrants in every step of the migration cycle. At the Manila GFMD, the Philippines shared how legal and institutional mechanisms of protection could empower migrant Filipinos to better contribute to their personal, institutional, and national development.

As Undersecretary Conejos explained, “It is first and foremost people that link our countries – not just the capital or goods that economists love to build their development and growth models on. It is people that stimulate the trade, business and economic exchanges that keep the global economy moving.”

“People are our biggest national asset at any time in the course of our social,

economic and political development. Economic development cannot occur without human development, that is, without human beings who are healthy, educated, employed, and able to care for their families,” Undersecretary Conejos added.

The Undersecretary further elaborated on the concept of shared responsibility for better protecting migrants, citing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's statement at the opening of the Manila GFMD that “Globalization should be for everyone, not just for the fittest. We need a world, where we are all equally part of a “caring and sharing” global community.”

As outgoing GFMD Chair, Undersecretary Conejos conveyed his hope that Greece will carry on the two overriding achievements of the Manila GFMD, namely, continuity and change: continuing and advancing the process of consultation and collaboration begun in Brussels last year, and changing the way the world looks at migration and development.

Undersecretary Conejos also affirmed the readiness of the Philippines to assist the Greek Chair in the challenging task of organizing the Third Meeting of the GFMD. He likewise expressed full support for the chosen theme of the Hellenic Republic, i.e., “Integrating Migration Policies in Development Strategies for the Benefit of All.” He lauded the Hellenic Republic's objective of promoting development for all, so that migration becomes a matter of option and not a necessity for migrant citizens. ■



Ambassador Tiglao leads Philippine Embassy officials in witnessing the handover of the GFMD Chairmanship by Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Esteban Conejos to the Hellenic Republic at a ceremony held in Athens on 16 December 2008.

Community News



Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Induction. Last 29 November 2008, Ambassador Tiglao graced the induction of the new officers of the Philippine Guardians Brotherhood, Inc. (PGBI), Greece Chapter held at the PGBI Headquarters in Athens. Sworn in as PGBI's new officers for 2008-2009 were led by Danilo Nimes (Chairman) and Avelino Valdez (Vice Chairman).



Philippine Ten-Pin Bowlers Association (PTBA) Induction. Amb. Tiglao was guest speaker and special guest at the 2nd Anniversary and induction of the officers of the Philippine Ten-Pin Bowlers Association (PTBA) held at Zafolia Hotel last 06 December 2008. The PTBA was formed in 2006 by a small group of enthusiastic bowlers who wish to promote camaraderie and the spirit of sportsmanship in the sport.



Philippine Overseas Society (POS) Christmas and New Year Dinner Party. Ambassador Rigoberto Tiglao and Madame Getsy Tiglao were guests of honor at the Philippine Overseas Society (POS) Dinner Party held on 20 December 2008 at the President Hotel. Photo shows Ambassador and Madame Tiglao with POS President Mrs. Charita Bataan.

FILBAG Christmas Party, Induction of Officers, and Awarding Ceremony. Ambassador Tiglao was special guest at the Christmas Party organized by the Filipino Bowlers in Athens, Greece (FILBAG) on 13 December 2008 at Novotel Hotel. The Ambassador also presided the induction of the new officers of FILBAG for 2008-2010. The new FILBAG officers are led by: Danilo Robles (President) and Abdul Baque Tanedo (Vice President). The evening was capped with the awarding of trophies to the winners of the 2008 FILBAG bowling tournament.



We welcome Pinoy news!
Send us your letters, news stories, press or photo releases for publication in the newsletter via regular mail, e-mail.

Makabayang BALITA sa Gresya at Cyprus

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The Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece welcomes...



Juanito P. Salayog, FSSE III, arrived in Athens on 25 September 2008 as administrative staff and driver of the

Embassy.

Mr. Salayog has been in the foreign service for eighteen years. He was assigned to the Philippine Mission in Vienna, Austria from 1999 to 2005. Born on 11 February 1952 in Manila, he is a graduate of the Caloocan Vocational School. He is married to Lolita Mangasi and has 6 children.



Tito A. Baldago, Jr., arrived in Athens last 23 September 2008 as Administrative Officer at the Philippine Overseas Labor Office

(POLO).

As Administrative Officer, Mr. Baldago assists Labor Attaché George Eduvala in the promotion of social protection and welfare of overseas Filipino workers in Greece. He is married and has two kids.

EMPLOYMENT SITUATIONER

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pay; lower for those in domestic service: e.g., **one month's pay for those who worked for 5-10 years; about six months' pay for those who worked for more than 30 years.**

6. Overtime pay for work over 40 hours a week: plus 25% for first 5 extra hours (for 5-days-week workers or first 8 extra hours (for 6-days-week workers; 50% for extra hours beyond 5 or 8 depending on the workweek.

7. Night allowance for work between 10 pm-6 am: plus 25%

8. Holiday and Sunday allowance: plus 75% of hourly rate.

9. Note: Domestic service workers are entitled only to nos. 1-5 above.

Land-based. Domestic service offers the best pay and the most transparently legal status for Filipino workers. Other jobs taken by Filipinos in less significant numbers are in the offices of foreign (so-called Law 89) companies and pleasure yachts. The foreign companies are actually Greek companies registered or incorporated in foreign countries.

Filipinos in Greece, therefore hope that Greece enlarge the annual quota of foreign workers, especially for domestic servants to enable more Filipinos – mostly relatives, townmates or friends of those already in the country – to come to Greece in the legal fashion.

Sea-based. The shipping industry is characterized by a shortage of officers and a glut of ratings. Greek shipowners have complained about the difficulty of recruiting *marine officers*, even from the Philippines.

The more enterprising owners, like Tsakos, have maintained scholarships for maritime courses in the Philippines – at \$300 a month per student – and have been rewarded with a modest supply of well-trained and loyal officers. Yet the problem apparently remains. Some crewing agents, like Thenamaris, observed that the requirements for an **officer's license in the Philippines may have gone too high** and have helped little in redressing the scarcity of officers.

The situation of *ratings* is different. The Philippines has so far been able to meet the demand of Greek ships for sailors, especially from cargo ships and tankers under Greek flag where Filipinos now comprise three-fourths of the foreign crew. For other ships, the Greeks have access to other nationalities. Bilateral Agreements. A large number of Filipino workers in Greece have been here for ten years or more. They came before the first legalization program in 1998. Many are now nearing or have reached pension age. Understandably, they have been clamoring for a bilateral agreement on social security that would enable them to return and receive their pensions in the Philippines. The negotiation of this agreement has been ongoing, but the conclusion is not yet in sight. (Maybe it is because, the Greeks will derive little from such an agreement. There are few, if any, Greeks in the Philippines who would retire and would receive Philippine pension should they return to Greece). Still, the agreement is the reward Filipinos hope to receive for contributing to the Greek social insurance system and for serving their Greek employers well. ■

Cyprus Corner



CONSULATE IN ACTION. Ambassador Rigoberto Tiglao recently visited the Consulate of the Philippine Honorary Consul in Nicosia and saw the hard work and dedication of Consul a.h. Shemaine Bushnell-Kyriakides, Labor Attaché Jaime Gimenez, and the consulate staff in providing efficient consular service to Filipinos in Cyprus. Shown above are, from left: Atty. Gimenez, assistants Gina M. Maandig and Zacarias Gorio G. Regalado, Consul a.h. Kyriakides, and volunteer Lus Estrellanes Paciente.



PHIL EMBASSY HOSTS CHRISTMAS DINNER RECEPTION FOR FILCOM

For the third consecutive year, the Philippine Embassy hosted a Christmas dinner reception for Accredited Community Partners (ACPs), leaders of Filipino community organizations, and other active Filipino individuals in Greece last 12 December 2008 at Embassy premises.

Clockwise: Ambassador Rigoberto Tiglao welcoming the guests and delivering his Christmas message; Guests getting their fill from the dinner banquet which consisted of primarily Filipino dishes; and, Minister and Consul General Constancio Vingno Jr. and Embassy personnel serenading the evening's guests with a medley of Tagalog and English Christmas songs.



More photos on this event can be viewed at the official website of the Philippine Embassy: www.athenspe.net.

(Left) Ambassador and Mrs. Getsy Tiglao and Consul General Vingno and Mrs. Yoko Vingno together with Mrs. Aida Garabiles of the Candonian Ladies Association and Mrs. Charita Bataan of the Philippine Overseas Society.

(Below) Ambassador Tiglao with the faculty members and staff of the Katipunan Philippine School (Philippine School in Greece).





(Left) Amb. Tiglao and Mrs. Getsy Tiglao together with members of the Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Inc.; (Above) PGBI members liven up the evening with a medley of songs.



Ambassador and Mrs. Tiglao are flanked from left by Philippine Overseas Society members Violeta Gasmen, Benilda Ponce, Aida Garabiles (Candon City Ladies Association in Athens), Loreta Malamion (Bagong Kapwa Ko Filipino sa Athens Organization), Shirley Manzano, POS President Charita Bataan, Angelita Gabuat (Candonian Ladies), Adoracion Garcia (Candonians in Greece), and Tessie Doe (Pastoral Group). Photos by: Carlos Montenegro II



Ambassador Tiglao and FILBAG President Danilo Robles.



Ambassador Tiglao and Bicol Saro President Joel Capuz.



Ambassador and Mrs. Tiglao with Pete Austria and Venn Angkico of the Gawad Kalinga-Couples for Christ and its Family Ministries.



Amb. Tiglao with Pinoy Ten-Pin Bowlers in Athens (PTBA) officers Sammy Diego (together with his family), Ralph Magpusao and Eunice Osorio.



Ambassador and Mrs. Tiglao with entrepreneur Ising Lozano and RCBC Remittance Center-Athens Manager Jomar Cortez.

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ATTY. JAIME P. GIMENEZ
Labor Attaché (Cyprus)



TITO A. BALDAGO
Administrative Officer



JEAN V. SANTOS
PAG-IBIG Representative

FILIPINOS IN GREECE: An Employment Situationer

By: Labor Attaché George Eduvala

According to the Greek National Statistical Service, there were 6,465 Filipinos in Greece as of 1 January 2006. Of these, 5,616 were holders of valid residence permits and 5,115 were IKA (Greek social security) members. In addition, there are an estimated 40,000 Filipino seafarers on board Greek-owned or managed ships.

Land based. Of the land-based Filipinos, 5,046 (78.1%) were female. Filipinos are among the most highly educated foreign workers in Greece. Almost two-thirds (63.7%) are university or college graduates, including 0.4% with masteral or doctorate

degrees. About 13.35% more - that adds up to more than 77% in all - have completed high school some of whom may have some college education. Of Filipinos working in Greece, 2.2% are in industry, 1.1% in agriculture, 0.7% in construction, 8.3% in trade and tourism, and the rest (87.7%) in other occupations (household service, etc.) Of the Filipinos holding residence permits, 4,007 (71.3% of 5,616) reside in Athens.

Many Filipino workers may have entered and worked in Greece - mostly as domestic helpers. In the 1998 Greek legalization program, 5,383 Filipinos applied for and obtained residence permits to shed off their irregular status. (The program was renewed in 2001 and 2004, but with fewer applicants). At the end of 2006, there were 5,616 Filipino holders of valid permits - an increase of 233 over eight years (since 1998) or about 29 a year which is slightly higher than the number

of contracts processed yearly at the POEA. This indicates that the number of Filipinos with regular status has not increased significantly over the years. They constituted 0.93% of the **foreigners' population** (predominantly European) in Greece, though still the largest from East and Southeast Asia, and 11th among all foreign nationals. Their legal status enabled the Filipinos to visit the home country. From 1998 to 2007 there were 16,851 OECs (**known as "exit pass"**) issued, an average of 1,685 a year. (This means the average Filipino goes on vacation once every three or four years).

Through the OEC and OAV, many Filipinos may now be considered as **"documented"**. In 2004, a total of 5,605 Filipinos registered as overseas absentee voters, and 4,673 actually cast their votes. In 2007, the registered voters rose to 5,908 and 1,837 voted. In both elections, the votes cast in Greece ranked second in Europe and tenth in the world, outside the Philippines. In 2006 and 2007, a total of 2,602 Filipino workers paid voluntary OWWA membership as a pre-requisite for the OEC. From 2005 to 2007, a total of 1,877 also became Pag-IBIG members.

Sea-based. The estimates of the number of Filipino seafarers aboard ships owned or managed by Greeks have ranged from 5,000 to 60,000. The first number was the one reported by the Embassy in its 2005 Report to Congress, whereas the second is the upper end of the range (40,000-60,000) volunteered by Interorient, the largest employer of Filipino seafarers in Greece. The POLO considers 40,000 as the most reasonable estimate.

In *Greek-owned ships flying foreign flags*, there were 1,225 (19.4%) Greek crewmembers, 1,115 Filipinos (17.6%), 671 Indians (10.6%), 411 (6.5%) Hondurans, 388 (6.1%) Indonesians, and 2,514 (39.8%) other nationalities. On board this type of ships, the Filipinos almost matched the number of Greek seafarers and even outnumbered them aboard tankers and

passenger ships.

In sum, of the 30,920 seafarers employed, 17,897 (57.9%) were Greeks, 6,492 (21.1%) Filipinos, 780 (2.5%) Indians, 594 (1.9%) Hondurans, 496 (1.6%) Ukrainians, 494 (1.6%) Indonesians, 113 (0.4%) Pakistanis, and 4,054 (13.1%) others.

All told, Filipino seafarers have a fair share of the crew in the Greek fleet. They comprised about half of foreign seafarers in the entire fleet, more than one-fifth of the crew in the higher paying Greek flagged ships, more than one-third of the Greek flagged ships mostly open to foreign seafarers (cargo ships and tankers), and three-fourths of all foreign seafarers in Greek cargo ships and tankers. Altogether, they beat their closest rival in Greece, the Indians, by more than 8 to 1.

From interviews with Greek owners, it was gathered that the factors that induce them to hire Filipinos are as follows: education and training, efficiency, and loyalty.

Working Conditions of OFWs

Land-based workers with valid residence permits enjoy the same rights as Greek nationals. They are entitled to the following:

1. Minimum wage: effective 1 September 2008: blue collar (including domestic service) - **€31.32/day or € 783/month**; white-collar jobs: **€ 701.00/month**; effective 1 May 2009 - blue collar (including domestic service) - **€33.04/day or € 826/month**; white-collar jobs: **€ 739.56.00/month**; Note: Blue-collar workers have higher minimum pay because of longer workweek.
2. **Christmas bonus (one month's pay)**, Easter bonus (half-month's pay) and leave allowance (half-month's pay).
3. Annual paid leave of 20-22 days (roughly a month).
4. Adequate medical and social security benefits for those who contribute to the local social security system (IKA).
5. Separation pay: generally, one **month's pay for every two years** of service, a fraction considered as **two years, up to 24 months'**

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Pag-IBIG CONDUCTS OUTREACH IN CYPRUS

POP representative Jean Santos and volunteers in Cyprus extended services to all OFWs during their campaign for Pag-IBIG membership particularly in Nicosia, Limassol and Paralimni.

Photos below show Ms. Santos together with Pag-IBIG volunteers.

For additional information on the Pag-IBIG Overseas Program (POP), please call Ms. Santos at these numbers: 210-6983.265 or 6937124927. ■

