

## PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN ATHENS COMMEMORATES 116<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE



The Philippine Embassy in Athens marked the celebration of the 116th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence this June with a series of activities, including a reception for the Filipino community, a flag-raising ceremony, a diplomatic reception, and a fashion exhibition "Banca Goes Athena," featuring "banaca wraps" by the renowned Philippine designer, Ms. Dita Sandico Ong.

A celebration for the Filipino community was held on 09 June 2014 at the Stratos Vassilikos Hotel. Leaders of Fili-

*(Continued on page 2)*



(top) Philippine Embassy personnel during the diplomatic reception in commemoration of the 116<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence on 13 June 2014 at Athens Ledra Hotel. (below) Athens PE's officers and staff during the reception hosted by the Philippine Embassy for the Filipino community held on 09 June 2014 at the Stratos Vassilikos Hotel.

## DFA Undersecretary Yabes Visits Greece for Evacuation Talks and to Celebrate the 2014 Day of the Seafarer

DFA Undersecretary for Migrant Worker's Affairs Jesus I. Yabes visited Greece from 23 to 26 June 2014 to prepare for the evacuation of Filipino workers from Libya through Greece.

Accompanied by Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre, members of the DFA Augmentation Team and Athens PE's Rapid Response Team (RRT), Usec. Yabes met on 23 June 2014 with MFA officials Loukas Karatsolis, Director of the A10 Directorate for Asia and Oceania and Ms. Alexandra Mantzila, Head of the MFA Crisis Management Unit, to request the assistance of the Greek government in allowing and facilitating

*(Continued on page 10)*



**Philippine Chairs 5th ASEAN Ambassadors in Athens Meeting.** Ambassador Meynard LB. Montealegre chaired the 5th ASEAN Ambassadors Meeting on Thursday, 23 January 2014 at the Ambassador's official residence. During the meeting, the Ambassadors discussed the status of the proposed ASEAN Committee in Athens (ACAT) and the joint activities of the four ASEAN embassies in Athens for the year. The ASEAN Ambassadors in Athens, composed of the resident ambassadors of the four ASEAN member countries in Athens (Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam), have been meeting regularly since February 2013 to share information on each embassy's activities in Greece, especially those aimed at strengthening relations with Greece, and to organize joint activities to promote ASEAN culture and identity. (right photo) The ASEAN Ambassadors and Working Group members toast towards more fruitful cooperation in 2014 among the four ASEAN resident embassies in Athens. ■



(Continued from page 1).... 116th Anniversary of the Philippine Independence Day

pino organizations and active members of the Filipino community were invited to a simple reception.

On 12 June, a flag-raising ceremony at the Philippine Embassy grounds was held, where Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre led the Embassy's officers and staff in singing "Lupang Hinirang," followed by the recitation of the "Panunumpa sa Watawat," and the reading of the messages of President Benigno S. Aquino III, Vice-President Jejomar Binay, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert F. Del Rosario and Secretary of Labor and Employment Rosalinda Baldoz.

On the evening of 13 June, around 200 guests from the diplomatic community, the Greek government, the Greek maritime/shipping industry, the business sector, the academe, and research institutions and think tanks, attended the diplomatic reception at the Athens Ledra Hotel.

In his remarks, Ambassador Montealegre stated that this year's diplomatic reception not only honors the bravery and courage of our forefathers who fought for Philippine Independence, but also recognizes the skills and talents of modern-day Filipinos who, with their creativity, ingenuity and suc-

cesses in both local and international arenas, make all Filipinos tremendously proud that they continue to epitomize the admirable qualities of the Filipino people.

The guests sampled the flavors of different Filipino dishes such as chicken adobo, beef longganiza balls, as well as native sweets such as buchi, and pichi-pichi.

The reception was highlighted by a short fashion exhibition entitled "Banaca Goes Athena," by internationally-acclaimed Philippine designer, Ms. Dita Sandico Ong. The exhibition showcased Ms. Sandico Ong's collection of various banaca wraps and fashion apparel. Her works "exemplify the indomitable spirit of both the Filipinos and the Greeks—strong, flexible and versatile—as mirrored by the wondrous abaca fabric that she uses in her craft," the Ambassador said.

The guests were delighted when Ms. Sandico Ong gave a demonstration on how to wear the banaca wrap in countless ways. They were amazed at the wrap's versatility and the numerous artistic ways to wear it.

The Embassy sought to sustain the keen interest of the Greek and international community in Athens with the "Banaca Goes Athena" fashion exhibition at this year's diplomatic reception.

Since 2012, the Embassy has embarked on a series of activities through the "Meet My Country: The Philippines" series designed to introduce the very best of the Philippines. In June 2012, the Embassy displayed Philippine furniture and home décor furnishings that blended antique and modern pieces from indigenous material to give the guests an idea of what a contemporary Filipino *sala* looks like.

This continued in May 2013 with a showcase of music, visual arts, fashion, food and fiestas at the Meet My Country event, which was hosted at the Ambassador's residence for the Women's International Club of Athens. This was preceded in February 2013 by the successful visit of Trade Undersecretary and PEZA Director General Lilia De Lima, where she encouraged Greek businesspeople to look at the trade and investment opportunities in the country. The third feature was "Sigay, Pilak, at Habi" (or "Shells, Silver and Woven-crafts") in June 2013, an exhibit of fine handcrafted products made from Philippine seashells and silver-plated bronze, combined with a display of woven crafts made from indigenous fabrics, textiles and weaves that combine traditional and contemporary designs and styles for fashion wear, accessories and home furnishing. ■



(top photos) Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre led the officers and staff of the Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece in singing the national anthem on 12 June 2014 at the Embassy grounds; The officers and staff of the Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece.

(right photos) Ambassador Montealegre delivers a short message on the creativity and artistry of Filipinos as exemplified by the collection of Ms. Sandico Ong; Filipino designer Ms. Dita Sandico Ong presents her Banaca Wrap collection.







(left to right) Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre and officers of the Philippine Embassy with MFA-Greece Protocol Department Dimitris Tsaknakis, Apostolic Nuncio Edward Joseph Adams, Ambassador Ricardo Tarcisio Navarrete-Montes de Oca of Mexico, and Ambassador Jorge Mastropietro of Argentina during the Philippine Diplomatic Reception held to celebrate the 116<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence on 13 June 2014 at Athens Ledra Hotel.



(left to right) Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre with Ambassador of Thailand and Mrs. Joompol Manaschuang, Ambassador Binh Vu of Vietnam, Ambassador Benny Bahanadewa of Indonesia, Mrs. Lila Lalaounis of the famed Ilias Lalaounis Jewelry, and Mrs. Anastasia Manalopoulou, Philippine Honorary Consul in Patras.



(Clockwise) Guests at the diplomatic reception enjoying the "Banaca Goes Athena" fashion exhibition of Ms. Dita Sandico Ong; "Banaca Goes Athena," a fashion exhibition held during the Philippine Diplomatic Reception on 13 June 2014 at Athens Ledra Hotel; and

Ambassador Montealegre poses with Ms. Sandico Ong, guest model Philippine Honorary Consul in Nicosia Shemaine Kyriakides and the models.





## Athens PE Commemorates Migrant Workers Day and the 116<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Philippine Independence Day with the Filipino Community in Greece



Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre, Consul General Chamaine Rowena C. Aviquivil, Consul Sheila Marie C. Tario, POLO OIC and Welfare Officer Leonor Mabagal and Pag-IBIG Representative Jean Santos receive the guests during the reception hosted by the Philippine Embassy for the Filipino community in Greece to commemorate Migrant Workers Day and the 116<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Philippine Independence Day on 09 June 2014 at Stratos Vassilikos Hotel in Athens.

The Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece together with the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) and Overseas Welfare Workers Agency (OWWA) and Pag-IBIG Office commemorated with the Filipino community in Greece the Migrant Workers Day and the 116<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Philippine Independence Day on 09 June 2014 at Stratos Vassilikos Hotel in Athens.

Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre delivered a short message, focusing on the good news



(left to right) Guests and members of the Filipino community listening to the message of the Ambassador; Ambassador Montealegre delivering his short message to the Filipino community.



from the Philippines and encouraging the members of the Filipino community in Greece to be partners of the Embassy in promoting the Philippines to Greek society.

Ambassador Montealegre also emphasized to the Filipino community to maintain the good image of the Filipinos in Greece.

Ambassador Montealegre also took the opportunity to remind them to vote for Vigan City as one of the New 7 Wonder Cities of the World. He also prompted them to register with the Embassy as an overseas voter for the coming elections on 2016.

During the reception, the theme for this year's celebration "KALAYAAN 2014: Pagsunod sa Yapak ng mga Dakilang Pilipino, Tungo sa Malawakan at Permanenteng Pagbabago," was displayed and some DOT and CITEM videos were also shown.

The reception was well-attended by the different Filipino community organizations (leaders and members), and various partners and friends of the Embassy.

Post exhibited kiping (rice wafer) and hats from Quezon Province, the Philippine Embassy's Meet My Country's posters and DOT's It's More Fun in the Philippines posters and brochures. ■



Ambassador Montealegre together with the Filcom members during the reception.



Athens PE's officers and staff during the reception hosted by the Philippine Embassy for the Filipino community held on 09 June 2014 at the Stratos Vassilikos Hotel.





The Accredited Community Partners and Filipino Community leaders of the different organization in Athens, Greece successfully organized the celebration of the 116<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Philippine Independence Day on 22 June 2014 at Fokianos Gymnasium, Zappeio. The officers and staff of the Philippine Embassy attended the celebration. Different Filcom organizations participated in the parade and displayed their talents during program. There were also several booths that sold

## Filipinos in Thessaloniki celebrate Kalayaan 2014



Consul Nikolaos Margapolous delivering his message to the Filipino Community in Thessaloniki on 15 June 2014 in Thessaloniki.



Officers of the Filipino Organization in Northern Greece Thessaloniki singing the National Anthem



Lola Jose and Lola Sefa perform their short skit.



Group of ladies with their folk dance.



## Philippine Embassy in Athens renews ties with the Local Government Officials, Business, and Academic Leaders of the Island of Corfu, Greece



Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre (right) with Corfu Mayor Ioannis Trepekis (left).

Philippine Ambassador to Greece Meynardo LB. Montealegre met with various government officials and business leaders during his official visit to Corfu, Greece from 21 to 22 February 2014.

During his meetings, Ambassador Montealegre explored areas of cooperation between the Philippines and the local government and business community of Corfu.

Ambassador Montealegre also highlighted the growing positive business confidence in the Philippines brought about by President Benigno S. Aquino III's transformational leadership, particularly his strong campaign for transparency and anti-corruption. In 2013, the Philippines posted an annual growth rate of 7.2% --- thereby making it the second fastest growing country in Asia.

The government officials and business leaders expressed great interest in the Philippines and agreed to coordinate further with the Philippine Embassy in Athens on how to increase trade, cultural cooperation, and people to people exchanges between the island of Corfu and the Philippines.

Ambassador Montealegre met Mr. Ioannis Trepekis, Mayor of Corfu, Mr. Christos-Iraklis Skourtis, Vice-Regional Governor of Corfu, Ms. Despina Zernioti-Vergi, Director of the Corfu Museum of Asian Art, Mr. Kontos Panteleimon, Vice President A of the Corfu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Metallinos Pavlos, Vice President B of the Corfu Chamber of Commerce and Indus-

try, and Mr. Stavros Katsios, Vice Rector of Financial Management & Development of the Ionian University. Ambassador Montealegre also met with members of the Filipino community in Corfu.

Corfu is a Greek island in the Ionian Sea. Corfu's Old Town in Kerkyra is part of the UNESCO World Heritage List. ■



Ambassador Montealegre (left) with Mr. Kontos Panteleimon, Vice President of the Corfu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (middle).

## Ambassador Montealegre Visits Rhodes to Explore Cooperation in Maritime/Shipping and Tourism



Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre and Consul Michaelis Roditis meets with Mr. Nikolaos Papastamatiou, General Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Dodecanese (CCID) to discuss economic cooperation during the visit to Rhodes on 27 February 2014.

Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre visited the city of Rhodes from 27 February to 02 March 2014 as part of the Embassy's economic and cultural diplomacy program and touching base with the Filipino community in the area.

The Ambassador, accompanied by Minister and Consul General Charmaine Rowena C. Aviquivil, took the opportunity to call on local government and private sector officials to brief them about the developments in the Philippines and discuss ways to enhance cooperation between the Philippines and Rhodes. Specifically, the Ambassador met with Mr. Ioannis Mahairidis, Governor of the South Aegean Region; Mr. Stathis Kousournas, Mayor of the City of Rhodes; Mr. Nikolaos Papastamatiou, General Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Dodecanese (CCID), and Dr. Jur. Nikolas Skourtos, Director of the Aegean Institute of the Law of the Sea and Maritime Law. The Ambassador also met with the Filipino community in the area.

During these meetings, the Ambassador pointed out the similar traits and interests shared by the Philippines and Greece, such as the presence of numerous islands in both countries' territories, their common maritime tradition, the Christian tradition

both countries can capitalize on these common characteristics to expand cooperation.

Ambassador Montealegre briefed the officials on the positive economic developments in the Philippines as a result of the transformational leadership of President Aquino, which emphasizes openness, transparency, and the fight against corruption. He emphasized that the stellar economic performance of the Philippines, manifested by its GDP growth rate of 7.2% for 2013, investment grade ratings from all three major credit ratings agencies, translate into greater investor confidence in the Philippines, and therefore provides excellent opportunities for expanded cooperation. Further, apart from the Philippines being a market of more than 95 million people, as a member of ASEAN, it can also be a gateway for Greece to penetrate the ASEAN market through the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement.

The Ambassador identified possible areas of cooperation between the Philippines and Rhodes in the maritime/shipping and tourism industries. Specifically, in the maritime field, the Philippines can offer its expertise and experience in ship crewing/manning and shipbuilding/repair. In tourism, both parties can explore opportunities for joint ventures

and deep in developing tourist resorts or partnerships for religiously, tourism packages between tour/travel companies. warmth and The Philippines can also be an excellent source of hospitality, both raw and finished products for hotel furniture and décor/furnishings. close family and décor/furnishings.

The Ambassador highlighted the imminent celebration of the 65<sup>th</sup> milestone anniversary of the establishment of relations between the two countries, and expressed the hope that this will pave the way for greater cooperation in terms of joint activities, people-to-people exchanges, and participation in each other's festivals.

He discussed the various opportunities for enhanced cooperation, and informed CCID of the revitalized Philippine-Hellenic and Hellenic-Philippine Chambers of Commerce that are planning to organize a business mission to the Philippines and to Greece to look into trade and investment opportunities. He also encouraged the CCID to explore possible participation of its members in the government's Public-Private Partnership programs.

The Greek officials welcomed the visit of the Ambassador, and expressed optimism that the visit will be the start of greater cooperation between the Philippines and the South Aegean region, particularly Rhodes. They praised Filipino workers in Rhodes for their positive contribution to the economy, and for their "special characteristics" such as their industry, diligence and trustworthiness, which "set a good example for Greeks." They also said that Filipinos in Greece are among the most well-integrated into Greek society.

The Mayor of Rhodes also invited Philippine participation in planned cultural activities in Rhodes in 2021, when the city will be named as the cultural capital of Europe. ■

**ECONOMIC/CULTURAL DIPLOMACY****Athens PE Participates in the Chef's Club of Greece's Gastronomy Without Borders, A Manifestation of Flavors from Around the World**

The Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece participated in the Chef's Club of Greece's "Gastronomy Without Borders, A Manifestation of Flavors from Around the World," during the 7<sup>th</sup> International Forum of Gastronomy held on 09 February 2014, at the Athens Metropolitan Expo Center.

Said event was jointly-participated in by the ASEAN missions in Athens, Greece (Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam). Other embassies like Poland, Russia, Albania, and Mexico also participated in the event.

The Philippine table presented as main dish: chicken adobo with garlic rice and pickled papaya garnish, laing, and mango and guyabano juice. The Embassy also prepared samplings of chicken adobo (flaked and placed on top of cucumber and bread), laing in small plates and bread, beef longganisa with cherry tomatoes placed in shot glasses, puto placed in colorful muffin wrappers, dried mangoes in sticks, and mango and guyabano juice in shot glasses.

Philippine and ASEAN cookbooks, table flags, sinamay, capiz, native placemats and colorful kiping from Quezon province were used to décorate the Philippine table.

The Embassy presented to the members of

the Chef's Club the food, their ingredients, including selected Greek products as well as how these were prepared. They were also informed of how Greek ingredients were used in some of the dishes - Greek vinegar and Greek wine in Chicken adobo, and olive oil and Greek



Consul Sheila Marie Tario and Ms. Jane Lucila Baltazar presented the Philippine food to the members of the Chef's Club during the "Gastronomy Without Borders, A Manifestation of Flavors from Around the World," in the 7<sup>th</sup> International Forum of Gastronomy held on 09 February 2014 at the Athens Metropolitan Expo. Looking on is Ambassador Montealegre.

vinegar with honey in the beef longganisa sampling.

The Embassy took the opportunity to promote Philippine food and drinks during the event by serving bite samplings of everything presented in the Philippine table.

The members of the Chef's Club, culinary

arts students, and other visitors enjoyed the food prepared by the Embassy especially the adobo flakes, longganisa, puto, and mango juice and dried mango. The laing stirred curiosity among the tasters as many inquired about taro leaves.

The organizers look forward to the Philippines' participation next year. ■

**Athens PE Participates in the LAASA 2<sup>nd</sup> International Food Festival**

Philippine Embassy booth during the LAASA 2<sup>nd</sup> International Food Festival held on 01 June 2014 at Nasioutzik Museum, Spata, Greece.

The Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece participated in the Lady Ambassadors and Ambassadors' Spouse Athens (LAASA) 2<sup>nd</sup> International Food Festival which was held on 01 June 2014 at the Nasioutzik Museum in Spata, Greece.

As part of its economic diplomacy activity for this year under the Meet My Country: The Philippines, Athens PE sold two Filipino dishes (vegetable lumpia and longganiza Ilokano) and mango juice. Post also distributed DOT's It's More Fun in the Philippines brochure, Post's Meet My Country brochure, Cobonpue furniture catalogs, and Philippine book marks. Pro-

ceeds of said event were all donated to LAASA's charity event project for this year.

Greek dignitaries, members of the Diplomatic Corps, and prominent members of the expatriate community and Greek society were among the guests during said event. Around 43 embassies participated in the food festival.

LAASA is an informal club that offers the opportunity to its members to meet each other at least once a month in order to promote friendship to share cultural and sport activities and to organize charity events in support of local causes.

For this year's Charity event, LAASA has opted to support



Ambassador Meynardo L.B. Montealegre (seated center) with other Ambassadors and Ambassador's Spouses.

the efforts of ORAMA ELPIDAS. For twenty years, ELPIDA under the direction of Mrs. Marianna Vardinoyannis, has helped children with cancer through its bone marrow transplant unit, its hospital for children with cancer and its guest house for sick children and their families. As this is a public hospital, it relies on the Greek government for its funding which is often not sufficient to maintain its current level of service and has to raise funds privately. ■



## CONSULAR UPDATES

### REMINDERS FOR FILIPINOS IN GREECE ON PASSPORT MATTERS

The Philippine Embassy in Athens wishes to remind all Filipinos working and living in Greece of the following:

- Always bring your original passport and permit with you. Greek authorities do not recognize passport copies during inspections.
- Renew your passport at least six months before the expiration date. Please note that Philippine Embassies only process and capture biometrics. All passports are being printed in the Philippines.
- A Philippine passport remains at all times the property of the Philippine government, the holder being a mere possessor thereof. Using of passports as collateral for debt is considered a serious offense.
- As long as the passport is valid the same may not be surrendered to any person or entity other than the Philippine government or its representative; and under the Philippine Passport Law of 1996, using another person's identity constitutes a serious offense and is punishable by law; and
- The International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) standards require that all

non-machine readable passports (MRRPs-Green Passports) should be out of circulation before 24 November 2015. Hence, all passport holders of said passports are encouraged to renew these. Passport extension is no longer allowed.

### Registrations of Filipinos at the Embassy

Please register yourself at the Embassy. An Embassy I.D. will be issued to the registrant (free-of-charge). Bring your passport and two 1 x 1 photos. ■

### Athens PE Second Sunday Passport Services

The Embassy holds Passport Services (passport, data capturing and releasing) every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month from 9:00 A.M to 12:00 noon. These consular services are being undertaken to accommodate Filipinos, especially those living outside of Athens, who could not come to the Embassy from Mondays to Fridays. However, Filipinos are encouraged to come to the Embassy during regular office hours in order to avoid long queues during the passport services held during 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays of the month. ■

### Athens PE

welcomes..



Mrs. Jo Grace C. Kau, who arrived in Athens on 28 June 2014 as additional staff at the Philippine Embassy.

Mrs. Kau joined the Department of Foreign Affairs in 2002. Prior to her posting in Athens, Greece, she was assigned at the Office of the Consular Affairs and Office of Middle East and African Affairs.

She was born on 06 February in Quezon City. She graduated from University of Manila with a degree in B.S. Foreign Service in 1995.

She is married to Ignacio Kau, Jr. and they have two children, Carlo and Kristen Celin. ■

## Athens PE Conducts GAD "Basic Self Defense Awareness and Skills Training" in Celebration of Women's Month



Practical demonstration of self-defense techniques.

The Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece conducted Basic Self-Defense Awareness and Skills Training for the female members of the Filipino community as part of its Gender and Development activities for 2014 and in time for March's celebration of the Women's Month. The training was held on Sunday, 09 March 2014 at the Embassy grounds.

The training was conducted by Mr. Arden Poblete of the KALIDU Filipino Martial Arts. The training covered basic techniques and practical self defense tips, especially for women and

with skills and techniques to protect themselves from attacks. He also read the message of President Benigno Aquino III on the Women's Month Celebration.

The training

applications of said techniques.

Said training aims to equip members of the Filipino community with the basic skills and tools to defend themselves against potential attackers.

Ambassador Meynardo L.B. Montealegre imparted to the female participants the significance of holding said training during Women's Month which aims to empower women and arm them

started with a lecture introducing Filipino Martial Arts to the participants. It was followed by demonstrations and actual applications on fending off attackers.

The participants expressed appreciation for the said training and hope that the Embassy will continue this kind of program to empower the OFs especially the women. The participants informed Post further that they will teach the techniques they have learned during the training to their children. ■



Athens PE presents certificates of appreciation to the participants of GAD Basic Self Defense Awareness and Skills Training.



## ATHENS PE Conducts Consular Outreach in Corfu

The Philippine Embassy in Athens conducted a consular outreach in Corfu on 22 February 2014.

The consular team provided a total of fifty (50) services. POLO-OWWA Athens likewise provided its services to the Filipinos in Corfu.

A town hall meeting was held in the evening for the Filipino Community members, where Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre inducted the officers of the Unity Group of Corfu Organization. An open forum was also held during the town hall meeting where Ambassador Montealegre heard the concerns of the Filipinos working and living in Corfu.

Corfu is a Greek island in the Ionian Sea. Corfu's Old Town in Kerkyra is part of the UNESCO World Heritage List. ■



Consular team led by Consul Sheila Marie Tario attends to the queries and applications for passport renewal of the members of the Filipino community in Corfu, Greece during the Embassy's consular outreach mission held on 22 February 2014 at the Catholic Hall in Corfu, Greece.



The Filipino community in Corfu poses with Amb. Montealegre (middle), Consul Sheila Marie Tario (left) and POLO OIC and Welfare Officer Leonor Mabagal.



Embassy team led by Ambassador Meynardo Montealegre (center, seated) pose with the officers of the Filipino Workers Association in Rhodes (FWAR) during the meeting with the Filipino community on 01 March 2014. Also shown are (left to right, seated): Welfare Officer and POLO OIC Leonor Mabagal, Consul General Charmaine Rowena C. Avigui, Philippine Honorary Consul in Rhodes Michalis J. Roditis, and Father John Luke Gregory, Parish Priest of the Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church.

The Philippine Embassy in Athens conducted a consular outreach mission to the city of Rhodes, Greece on Saturday, 01 March 2014. These formed part of the official visit of Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre to Rhodes from 27 February to 02 March 2014.

The Embassy team rendered consular services at the Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church (also known as Sta. Maria Church) Community Center. They were heartily welcomed by the Filipino community in Rhodes who were looking forward to a visit from the Embassy after two years.

The team processed a total of 27 e-passport applications and six other services. OWWA processed 48 membership

renewals and 8 Overseas Employment Certificates (OECs)/exit passes, while Pag-ibig had 23 transactions. The consular outreach mission was conducted with the assistance and support of Honorary Consul in Rhodes Michalis Roditis, the Filipino community in Rhodes, and Fr. John Luke Gregory, Vicar General and Parish Priest of the Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church.

Ambassador Montealegre met with 35 members of the Filipino community in Rhodes at the Sta. Maria church community center on 01 March, right after the consular outreach. In his remarks, he said that in his meetings with the local and private sector officials in Rhodes, they heaped praises on the Filipinos in the city for their industry, trust-

## Athens PE Conducts Consular Outreach and Meets with Filipino Community in Rhodes

worthiness and positive work attitude. He informed them of the positive developments in the Philippines. He called on the Filipinos in Rhodes to unite and to always protect the positive image of Filipinos among Greeks. He also swore into office the new officers of the Filipino Workers Association of Rhodes (FWAR).

The city of Rhodes is the capital of the island of Rhodes, part of the Dodecanese group of islands, and located approximately 18 kilometers southwest of Turkey in the eastern Aegean Sea. It is about 629 kilometers from Athens, and has an estimated population of 115,000 to 120,000. The city hosts an estimated 150 Filipinos, most of whom are household service workers, and who are members of the FWAR and the Union of Philippine Migrants. ■



Data capturing and processing of e-passport applications of the Filcom in Rhodes by the Embassy's consular team on 01 March 2014.



(Continued from page 1)....Seafarer

the exit of Filipino nationals from Libya to the Philippines through Greece, as it did during the 2011 Libyan crisis.

He also met with the Embassy officers and staff to prepare them for their role in the evacuation, and to share best practices in handling assistance-to-nationals cases.

The Undersecretary then proceeded to Crete with the Ambassador, Augmentation Team and RRT on 24 to 25 June for talks with local officials there on the evacuation process (separate story on page 13).

Undersecretary Yabes also imparted a short message to Filipino seafarers and members of the Filipino community in Athens during a special mass organized by the Embassy to commemorate the 2014 Day of the Seafarer on 25 June 2014 at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Psychiko, Athens. The mass was celebrated by Fr. Alberto Paima, IVE.

In his remarks, Undersecretary Yabes recognized the contributions of seafarers to the world. He also appreciated their sacrifices amidst the many



Undersecretary Jesus I. Yabes, Ambassador Meynardo L.B. Montealegre (both standing on the left), Consul Sheila Marie Tario and Special Assistant Rene Villa with the Filipino community.

dangers that they face while at sea.

Filipino seafarers participated in the readings during the Holy Mass. Chief Mate James Po read the first reading, and the responsorial Psalm was read by Mr. Homer Galesa, a seafarer working in a yacht. ■



(left to right) Seafarers, Mr. Homer Galesa and Mr. James Po delivering the readings during the special mass for the day of the seafarer.



(Below photo) Usec. Yabes together with Athens PE's officers and staff.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

We welcome Pinoy news!

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



(Top photos) Ambassador Meynardo L.B. Montealegre delivers a short message to the members of the Filipino community during the 28th anniversary of the EDSA People Power Revolution on 25 February 2014 at the Embassy.; Embassy officers and staff attended the 8th anniversary celebration of the Jesus Is Lord Church which was held on 30 March 2014 in President Hotel.; Consul Sheila Marie Tario attended the 1st anniversary celebration of the Bicolanos Society which was held on 17 May 2014 in President Hotel; and (below photo) Consul Tario inducted the new officers of the Bagong Kapwa Ko Pilipino Athens Organization during its 22nd Anniversary which was held on 24 May 2014 at the President Hotel.







Vigan has successfully hurdled the first phase of the elimination round in the search for the New 7 Wonders - Cities, with the triumphant 21 cities announced last July 7, 2014. The competition however is far from over. The next qualifying round started July 8, 2014 and will end on October 7, 2014 where 7 out of 21 cities will be eliminated.

In addition to the online voting via [www.n7w.com/en/cities](http://www.n7w.com/en/cities), the New 7 Wonders Foundation opened its SMS and phone lines for this voting phase. The following are the new processes:-'

- For 1 vote, text Vigan and send to 29290777 on all OFW SIM / Philippine SIM cards;
- For 10 votes, text Vigan10 and send to 29290777 on all OFW SIM / Philippine SIM cards or;
- Dial any of the following international numbers for overseas telephone voting, press 21 to vote for Vigan, Philippines, to wit:

+881821611990  
+447589975201  
+34902735471  
+88216101688  
+8821622774600  
+447559121023  
+881921611990  
+8821622776600  
+447559583500

The abovementioned new voting processes are encouraged as it is advantageous to our country's bid since we do not need to vote for seven cities but for Vigan, Philippines alone.

Please support and vote for Vigan.  
Thank you. ■

## MAGPAREHISTRO NA bilang isang FILIPINO OVERSEAS VOTER para sa darating na HALALAN 2016

**WHAT:** PHILIPPINE OVERSEAS VOTING REGISTRATION/ CERTIFICATION:

Update your **NEW ADDRESS**; and

**REACTIVATE** your registration (for those who failed to vote in two consecutive national elections)

**WHEN:** FROM 06 MAY 2014 TO 31 OCTOBER 2015

MONDAY TO FRIDAY, (9 AM to 5 PM); CLOSED ON HOLIDAYS  
SECOND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH (9 AM- 12NN)

**WHERE:** PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN ATHENS

**WHO:** ALL QUALIFIED FILIPINO CITIZENS AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE ON THE DAY OF ELECTION (9 MAY 2016)

*FOR DETAILS, EMAIL, CALL OR VISIT:*

**The Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece**

**26 Antheon St. Paleo Psychico 154 52**

**Tel. No. 30 210 672 1883 / 210 672 1837 / Fax No. 30 210 672 1872**

**Email: [athenspe@otenet.gr](mailto:athenspe@otenet.gr)**

**Website: [athenspe.dfa.gov.ph](http://athenspe.dfa.gov.ph)**

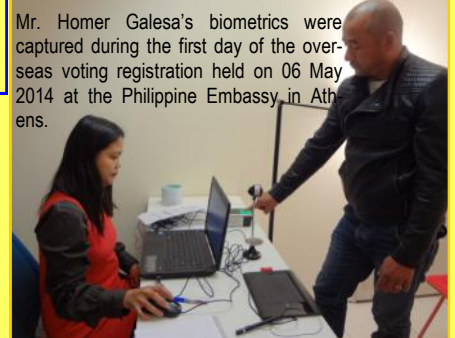
### Athens PE Commences Overseas Voting Registration

The Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece commenced Overseas Voting registration/certification for qualified overseas Filipinos on 06 May 2014 at the Philippine Embassy.

The first day of Overseas Voting (OV) registration proceeded smoothly and without incident. A total of eight (8) Filipinos applied for registration as Overseas Voters and two (2) applied for reactivation.

The first OV registrant was Mr. Homer Galesa, a 41-year old OFW from Ambelokipi, Athens, who has been working in Greece for seven years now. He is the President of the Mindanao Visayas Society, a Filcom organization in Greece. Mr. Galesa is from Misamis Oriental and entered Greece as a seafarer. He is currently working in a yacht as a land-based worker. This will be his first registration as an overseas voter since he came to Athens. Due to the nature of his work, he is always out in the islands and was not able to register before. He expressed his eagerness to take part in the electoral process, specifically through registering as an overseas voter. He informed the Embassy that such OV registration will give him the opportunity to exercise his right to vote even while he is abroad.

Mr. Galesa learned about the OV registration during the Embassy's regular monthly meeting with the Filipino community. In addition, he has advised and encouraged the members of his organization to register with the Embassy.



Consul Sheila Marie Tario interviews second overseas voting registrant, Mrs. Maryline Cortez.

The second registrant is Mrs. Maryline Cortez, 34 years old, originally from Bantay, Ilocos Sur. Mrs. Cortez has not participated in any overseas voter's registration or election since she left the Philippines. Since she is residing outside Athens, she finds it difficult to register because of the distance and her busy schedule. She came today at the Embassy to renew her passport and took the time to register as an overseas voter. ■



## DA Undersecretary Attends Fishing Capacity Conference



(top photo) Undersecretary Emerson Palad (left) together with the organizers and fellow speakers during the Fishing Capacity Conference held from 13 to 14 March 2014 in Thessaloniki, Greece.

(right photo) Undersecretary Palad signing the joint statement.

Department of Agriculture Undersecretary, Atty. Emerson Palad, together with Ambassador Meynardo Montealegre, Consul Sheila Marie Tario with Agricultural Attaché (Brussels) Pit Laquian, attended the Fishing Capacity Conference held in Thessaloniki, Greece from 13 to 14 March 2014. Undersecretary Palad delivered a country statement during the session entitled "Policymakers' Role in Addressing Overcapacity." The conference was hosted by European Commissioner Maria Damanaki and was organized under the auspices of the Greek EU Presidency. The conference focused on the issues of handling excessive fishing and combating these problems.

At the closing session, a "Joint Statement on Efforts to Promote Sustainable Fishing Capacity Management on the Global Scale" was signed by the EU, the Philippines, Indonesia, the US, Japan, and Colombia.

A meeting between DA Undersecretary, Atty. Palad, and EU Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Mrs. Maria Damanaki, also took place in the sidelines of the conference on 13 March 2014.

During the meeting, the EU Commissioner Damakaki stated that the EU and the Philippines need to enhance cooperation in the area of implementation that is more sustainable. Undersecretary Palad extended Secretary Alcala's invitation for Commissioner Damanaki to visit the Philippines. ■



Pit Laquian, Agricultural Attache, Undersecretary Palad and Ambassador Montealegre.



Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre and officers of the Embassy attended the Posidonia 2014, the world's largest shipping exhibition which was held from 2 to 6 June 2014 at the Metropolitan Expo Center in Athens.

The opening ceremony was held on 02 June and was inaugurated by Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras.

The Maritime Industry Authority of the Philippines will be participating in POSIDONIA 2016. ■

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Minister and Consul General Charmaine Rowena C. Avicivil  
Editor-in-Chief

Second Secretary and Consul Sheila Marie C. Tario  
Managing Editor

Joanne M. David  
Associate Editor

Byron Villanueva and Solomon Balmeo  
Photographers

Address: 26 Antheon St., Paleo Psychico 15452  
Athens, GREECE

Tel. Nos.: +30 210 6721837 or 883 /2106722 011

Fax No.: +30 210 6721 872

Email: [athenspe@otenet.gr](mailto:athenspe@otenet.gr)

Website: [www.athenspe.dfa.gov.ph](http://www.athenspe.dfa.gov.ph)

## Ambassador Montealegre Meets with Director of the Aegean Institute of the Law of the Sea and Maritime Law

Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre met with Dr. Jur. Nikolas Skourtos, Director of the Aegean Institute of the Law of the Sea and Maritime Law in Rhodes on 28 February 2014. This formed part of the official visit of the Ambassador to City of Rhodes from 27 February to 02 March 2014.

Founded in 1991 and located in the medie-

val city of the island of Rhodes, the Institute is an independent research center affiliated with the University of the Aegean, supervised by the Ministry of Justice and financed primarily by public funds. Its main objectives are: production of research projects; publication of scientific reports and announcements; conduct of lectures, seminars and conferences; collaboration with

Greek and international academic institutions and scholars; and issuance of opinions and consultations.

The Institute sponsors the Rhodes Academy on Oceans Law and Policy, which invites scholars to an intensive, three-week course of study on this field every year. Dr. Skourtos spoke of the high quality of Filipino participants in the Academy, including several from the Department.

The Ambassador and Dr. Skourtos discussed possibilities for academic cooperation between the Institute and Philippine counterpart specialist agencies, which may take the form of co-sponsorship of a seminar or congress on a selected topic related to maritime or oceans law or policy to be held in Greece or the Philippines, or a tie-up or joint projects between the Aegean Institute and counterpart Philippine institutes specializing in maritime and oceans law. ■

Ambassador Montealegre and Dr. Jur. Nikolas Skourtos, Director of the Aegean Institute of the Law of the Sea and Maritime Law, discuss a wide range of issues including the West Philippine Sea and academic cooperation in the field of maritime and oceans law during their meeting in Rhodes on 28 February 2014.





## DFA Augmentation Team Visits Crete for Possible Evacuation through Greece



The teams requested the assistance of the Cretan local government in facilitating the exit of Filipino nationals from Libya to the Philippines through Crete. The teams also assured the Greek officials that it will shoulder the cost of repatriation, that the evacuees will not stay in Greek territory any longer than is necessary, and that an Embassy team will be stationed in Crete to assist Filipino evacuees.

All the Greek officials that the teams met provided the assurance that Greece will assist when it becomes necessary to evacuate the Filipinos from Libya. The MFA said that it is admirable that

The DFA Augmentation Team led by Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs Jesus I. Yabes, Ambassador to Athens Meynardo LB. Montealegre (3rd and 5th from left), and Athens PE's Rapid Response Team (RRT) call on Mr. Arnaoutakis Stavros, Governor of the Prefecture of Crete, on 24 June 2014 to discuss the exit through Crete of Filipinos who may possibly be evacuated from Libya. Also in photo are (from left) DFA-DUMWA Special Assistant Renato Pedro O. Villa, Philippine Honorary Consul in Crete Alexandros Fasoulakis and Athens PE's RRT Leader, Minister and Consul General Charmaine Rowena C. Aviquivil.

An Augmentation Team from the Department, accompanied by Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre, and Athens PE's Rapid Response Team (RRT) visited Crete on 24 to 30 June 2014 to prepare for the evacuation of Filipinos from Libya via Crete.

The DFA Augmentation Team was led by Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs Jesus I. Yabes, with Special Assistant Renato Pedro O. Villa and ATN Officer Ma. Cecilia P. Bernardo as its members. Athens PE's RRT, composed of Minister and Consul General Charmaine Rowena C. Aviquivil, ATN Officer Maria Clorinda V. Bonabon-Dankers and Welfare Officer and POLO OIC Leonor C. Mabagal, remained in Crete until 30 June 2014 for further meetings with officials, hotel owners and other Filipino community leaders. They were assisted throughout the visit by Philippine Honorary Consul to Crete, Alexandros Fasoulakis.

The purpose of the visit was to coordinate with Greek officials, private sector representatives and with the Filipino community in Crete to prepare it as an exit/transit point for the possible evacuation of Filipinos from Libya.

The team met with Mr. Pliakas Georgios, Man-

ager, Nikos Kazantzakis Airport; Mr. Arnaoutakis Stavros, Governor of the Prefecture of Crete; Mr. Nikolaos Christofakis, Heraklion Police Director; Mr. Dolapsakis, Vice President of the Heraklion Port Authority; Mr. Grigorios Rokadakis, General Secretary of the Decentralized Administration of Crete; and Mr. Dimitris Karatzanis, Chairman of the Municipal Council of Heraklion from 24 and 27 June 2014 in Heraklion.

They also met with Mr. Darivianakis Diogenis, Port Manager on 25 June 2014 in Chania, Crete.

During the meetings with Greek officials, the DFA and Embassy teams informed the former that it is closely monitoring the situation in Libya, where there is an estimated 13,000 Filipinos; that the government is now encouraging voluntarily repatriation of Filipinos from that country; that in the event that the situation there worsens and air travel becomes impossible, the Philippine government will arrange the evacuation of Filipinos from Libya by land and sea; that Crete has been identified as a possible exit/transit point of Filipinos to be evacuated from Libya.

the Philippines is planning for any contingency well ahead of time, and also that it is reassuring that a blueprint for evacuation is already in place based on the experience of both Greece and the Philippines during the 2011 crisis. The officials from Crete also expressed their willingness to help, but also added that everything will have to be closely coordinated with and approved by the MFA.

Athens RRT met with hotel owners/managers in Hersonisos to discuss accommodation for Filipinos to be evacuated.

Meetings were also held with Filipino Community leaders led by Rita Justo Lagen of the Filipino Club in Heraklion on 24 June; with Yolanda Cabalag, founder of international group Migrants without Borders and owner of three Chinese restaurants in Crete on 28 June; and with Cherry Leano, owner of Rytion Apartments in Hersonissos on 27 June 2014. They all gave their commitment to assist should evacuation take place in terms of mobilizing Filipinos, providing transportation, food and toiletries, and other forms of voluntary help. ■



DFA Augmentation Team, Ambassador Montealegre and Athens PE's RRT meet with Mr. Dolapsakis, Vice President of the Heraklion Port Authority, and with Port Authority officials on 24 June 2014.



**LABOR PAGE****POEA Implements  
OEC Requirements**

Please be informed that starting August 1, 2014 all vacationing overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who may wish to secure Overseas Employment Certificate (OEC)/Exit Pass at the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) before leaving Greece shall be required to submit a copy of *valid* employment contract/agreement or any of the following documents that could establish employment details of a worker in concurrence with the policy of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) in the issuance of OEC/Exit Pass at home front:

- 1) APOPASI
- 2) ERGOSIMO
- 3) CERTIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT (for workers with previous record at the POEA and with the same employer); and
- 4) COMPANY ID OR PAY SLIP (For skilled worker/employee)

This requirement is also in accordance to the provisions of the Omnibus Rules and Regulations Implementing the Migrant Workers and Overseas Act of 1995 as Amended by Republic Act No. 10022 (Further Improving the Standard of Protection and Promotion of the Welfare of Migrant Workers and their Families).

**OWWA FREE  
SKILLS TRAINING**

A total of 130 OFW-students who enrolled in free skills trainings offered by the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) under the auspices of the PE Athens during the 2014 Winter Session, successfully complied with the requirements in Caregiving; Computer Literacy; Basic Greek Language; Cosmetology; and Fruits & Vegetable Carving.

These trainings were conducted at the Migrant Workers and Other Filipinos Resource Center (MWOFRCC) from February 9 to May 23, 2014. ■



For more details please contact

Mrs. Jean V. Santos at tel. nos.  
210 698 3265/ 693 7124 927/  
697 742 5678

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

All Pag-IBIG members in Greece could now directly pay their monthly contribution, housing loan, short term loan and MP2 thru CBN Grupo at 52 Kiffisias Avenue, Ambelokipi, Athens.

For those residing outside Athens and in the islands of Greece, you may also avail of the cash deposit thru local Greek banks (e.g. Etniki Trapeza (National Bank of Greece) or Euro Bank.

Please call CBN Grupo. at telephone number: 210-7798155 for more details on cash deposit through local Greek banks

For further information, please contact or visit Pag-IBIG Fund desk and look for:

**Ms. Jean V. Santos**  
**Pag-IBIG Representative**  
**Tel. # (210) 698-32-65/  
30 6977-425678**  
**Add: #10 Fhiotidos Str.,  
Ambelokipi, Athens.**

The Pag-IBIG Office is open from Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and every Sundays from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. ■

**ATHENS PE Holds Two Health Screenings for OFWs**

Volunteers attending to Filipinos availing themselves of the free health screening.

The Philippine Embassy through POLO-OWWA in Athens, Greece conducted two separate health screenings for the overseas Filipino workers in Greece.

The first health screening was held on 09 March 2014 led by Welfare Officer Leoner Mabagal. WelOff Mabagal was assisted by

Filipino and Greek medical volunteers. They provided free medical services such as medical consulta-

tions; determination of blood pressure; blood sugar; cholesterol level; dental and eye check-up for OFWs during the quarterly health screening held at the Embassy grounds.

On 08 June 2014, another health screening was held for the OFWs. Hundreds of OFWs mostly household workers availed of the quarterly free medical outreach (health screening) of POLO conducted at the grounds of the Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece. ■



OFWs queuing for the medical check-ups.



## ATHENS PE Holds Appreciation Night For the OFWs in Greece



Ambassador Montealegre and WelOff Mabagal with the Filipino community during the Appreciation Night held on 14 January 2014 at President Hotel.

In recognition of the spirit of volunteerism and support of Filipino communities and institutional partners at job-site to the implementation of on-site programs and projects for the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and their families, the Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece held the first "Appreciation Night" dubbed as "Gabi Ng Pasasalamat" on January 14, 2014 at the President Hotel in Athens, Greece.

The event was Post's simple way of

thanking and remembering the invaluable contributions of OFW groups, individual volunteers and institutional partners to the attainment of the goals and objectives of the government in the promotion of the welfare and protection of interest of migrant workers.

The government could not send enough

personnel to embassies and consulates including representatives of POLO and OWWA throughout the world. Despite the limited resources, for years, Post was able to carry out



Guests dancing with the Greek folk dance group.

functions and projects with the help of volunteers, supporters and institutional partners.

During the occasion, guests were entertained with Greek folk dances and music and treated with simple dinner. ■

### CYPRUS PAGE

Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre made three official visits to Cyprus during the first semester of 2014 to meet a number of Cypriot officials to discuss ways to further deepen PHL-Cypriot relations.

#### 10 January 2014

During the Ambassador's visit on 10 January 2014, the Ambassador attended the New Year's reception at the Presidential Palace in Nicosia, where President Nicos Anastasiades and First Lady Andri Anastasiades received heads of diplomatic missions and international organizations.

The Ambassador also called on MFA officials such as Ambassador Pantelakis Eliades, Political Director of MFA and Ambassador-Designate to the Philippines, Ambassador Petros Kestoras, Director of Division E (Schengen & Consular Affairs) and Ambassador Nearchos Palas, Chief of Protocol to discuss proposed agreements such as the Political Consultations MOU, the Social Security Agreement

and the Visa Waiver Agreement and preparations for the PHL-Cyprus 35th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, among other bilateral issues.

#### 28 February to 01 March 2014

Ambassador Montealegre met with Ambassador Evripidis Evriyiades, Acting Permanent Secretary of the Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 28 February 2014 and with Mr. Panayiotis K. Papadopoulos, Director of the Asia Department on 1 March 2013 to discuss the West Philippine Sea (WPS) Issue, the pending Social Security Agreement, and the new leadership in Cyprus, among other issues.

#### 10 April 2014

Ambassador Montealegre met with Ambassador Pantelakis Eliades, Political Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus and Non-Resident Ambassador-Designate to the Philippines on 10 April 2014 to discuss matters on West Philippine Sea (WPS).

### MEETINGS IN CYPRUS

Ambassador Montealegre provided Ambassador Eliades with a short background on the WPS and the current developments on the WPS.

He also met with Dr. Anthony Madella, Head of legal & EU Harmonization Division and EMSA Alternate Director, Maritime Policy, Multilateral Affairs and Standard Division on 10 April 2014 to discuss issues concerning the European Maritime Safety Agency report on the Philippines.

Ambassador Montealegre also met with Mr. George Demetriades, COSS Representative, Marine Surveyor, Mr. Kyriakos Kyriakou, OIC, seafarer's Certifications and Requirements, Captain Eugen Adami, President of Cyprus Shipping Chamber and Ambassador Eliades of Cyprus Ministry of Foreign Affairs to make representations on Philippine maritime issues. ■

Cyprus page continued on the next page.....



## "Filipino Community in Nicosia, Cyprus Celebrates 116th Independence Day and Migrant Workers Day"

In-



Welfare Officer Sylvia Valdez (fourth from left), Ambassador Meynardo Montealegre (sixth from left), and Honorary Consul Shemaine Bushnell-Kyriakides (seventh from left) with some of the graduates of the Reintegration Training Program of POLO-OWWA.

The event also recognized some 400 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who completed short courses on Greek Language, English Lessons, Basic Computer, Basic First Aid, Filipino Martial Arts, Business Counseling, Financial Literacy, Hair Cutting, Beauty Care, Beadwork, and Ballroom Dancing under the Reintegration Training Program of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the European Union.

In his message, the Ambassador encouraged all Filipinos in Cyprus to invest by starting a small business in the Philippines. He also emphasized the role of every Filipino in creating a stable and prosperous republic. ■

Philippine non-resident Ambassador to Cyprus Meynardo L.B. Montealegre attended the joint celebration by the Filipino community in Cyprus of the 116th Philippine Independence Day and Migrant Workers Day on 6 July 2014 at the European University Cyprus in Nicosia. The event was organized by the POLO-OWWA Office led by Welfare Officer Sylvia Valdez with the support of Philippine Honorary Consul Shemaine Bushnell-Kyriakides.

Filipinos from cities all over Cyprus such as Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, and Paphos commemorated the "Araw ng Pasa-

salamat at Pagkakaisa" with a day-long celebration of nationalistic presentations and cultural performances.

Various Filipino community organizations showcased their talents in special numbers such as a group rendition of a medley of Kundiman songs, a short skit on the history of the Philippines, and folk/ethnic dances.



A Filipino community organization performs a skit on the history of Philippines.

### Athens PE Conducts Two Consular Mobile Services in Cyprus for the 2nd Quarter of 2014

Athens PE sent a five member Embassy team to Nicosia, Cyprus from 28 to 30 March 2014 in order to meet the Filipino community and render consular mobile services. Post was able to process 656 passport application forms, 18 civil registrations, 31 Affidavits and 680 PAG IBIG transactions.

During said mission, POLO-OWWA Nicosia also took the opportunity to provide information to Filipinos on the Philippine government's programs designed to empower OFWs and their families in



Consular team at work during the Consular Outreach Mission to Nicosia held from 28 to 30 March 2014 at the Philippine Consulate.

the Philippines, through skills enhancement trainings, seminars, other programs and benefits available to OWWA members and their loved ones.

A Pag-IBig representative likewise provided pertinent information regarding its programs available for them. The Filipino overseas concerned expressed their gratitude for the Embassy's effort in touching base with them.

From 26 to 30 June 2014, a five-member consular team including one Pag-IBIG representative, in cooperation with the Philippine Honorary Consulate in Nicosia and with the assistance of some members of the Overseas Filipino Volunteers Cyprus, processed a total of 662 e-passport applications (including 5 lost passports), and miscellaneous services

(reports of birth and marriage, affidavits and certifications).

The team also conducted consultations with the Filipino community on dual citizenship (three applicants applied and are scheduled to take their oath in July 2014), change of status from single to married (amendment) especially for Filipinas married to Cypriot nationals, registration of births for single parent, and contributions to Pag-IBIG, OWWA, etc. ■

### WelOff Mabagal Acts as OIC of POLO in Nicosia Cyprus

POLO Officer-in-Charge and Welfare Officer Leonor Mabagal visited Nicosia, Cyprus from 23 to 29 April 2014 to manage POLO Cyprus in the absence of Welfare Sylvia Valdez.

During her stay at the POLO Cyprus Wel Off Mabagal verified employment contracts mostly for HSWs and cooks/chefs in hotels and restaurants.

She conducted hospital visitation, airport assistance, and handled counseling.

She also provided assistance to common complaints of Filipino workers in Cyprus. ■



Passport applicants queuing for the renewal of their passports during the Consular outreach mission in Nicosia, Cyprus held from 26 to 30 June 2014 at the Philippine Consulate.