

ATHENS PE CELEBRATES 114TH ANNIVERSARY OF PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE



(Left to right) Embassy officials at the 10 June Filcom Independence Day Celebration; The Philippine Embassy officers and staff led by Ambassador Meynardo Montealegre during the flag raising ceremony in commemoration of the 114th Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Philippine Independence held on 12 June 2012 at the Embassy; and Ambassador Montealegre delivers his short message at the diplomatic reception held on 12 June 2012 at Ledra Marriot Hotel.

A series of activities marked the Philippine Embassy in Athens' celebration of the 114th anniversary of Philippine independence, including a parade, barrio fiesta-type Filipino community event, flag-raising ceremony, diplomatic reception and exhibit of modern Philippine furniture and home décor.

The Embassy and the Filipino community in Greece kicked off the celebration on Sunday, 10 June 2012 at the Zappeion grounds in Athens with an Independence Day parade led by Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre and the Embassy staff, and participated in by 34 various Filipino community associations dressed in their best Filipiniana attire. This was followed by a whole-day barrio fiesta, Philippine traditional games, talent show and raffle. Filipino schools and

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Ambassador Montealegre Presents Credentials to Cyprus President



President of the Republic of Cyprus Demetris Christofias congratulates Ambassador Montealegre shortly after the presentation of credentials.

The Ambassador presented his credentials to President Christofias in simple ceremonies at the Cypriot Presidential Palace in Nicosia at 12 noon on 10 January 2012. He was accompanied by First Secretary and Consul Charmaine Rowena C.

(Continued on page 3)

IST COLLEGE OF GREECE OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS TO FILIPINO STUDENTS

The Philippine Embassy in Athens reported to the Department of Foreign Affairs that the general manager of the Independent Science and Technology College (IST) of Greece, Mr. Drakoulis Fountoukakos, offered two full scholarships to Philippine high school students. The offer of scholarships was conveyed by Dr. Fountoukakos to Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre during their meeting at the IST College on 11 July 2012.

The IST College was founded in 1989 and has established itself as one of the leading educational institutions at university level in Greece. IST College has a franchise agreement with

(Continued on page 2)

Ambassador Montealegre Meets with the Local Government Officials and Business Leaders of Thessaloniki



Ambassador Montealegre explores areas of cooperation between the Philippines and the prefecture of Thessaloniki with Vice Governor Apostle Tzitzikostas

The Philippine Ambassador to Greece Meynardo LB. Montealegre met with various government officials and business leaders during his official visit to Thessaloniki from 17 to 18 July 2012. The visit and meetings with the following officials were organized by Philippine HonCon Margaropoulos including: Mr. Apostle Tzitzikostas, Vice Governor of Thessaloniki Prefecture, Mr. Yiannis S. Boutaris, Mayor of Thessaloniki, Mr. Konstantinos Papaioannou, Vice President of the Thessaloniki Port Authority, Mr. Dimitrios Bakatselos, President of the Chamber of Com-

(Continued on page 2)



ATHENS PE HOLDS THE FIRST HONCONS PLANNING SESSION



The Philippine Embassy Officials together with the Honorary Consuls.

The Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines in Athens held the first ever planning session with the Philippine Honorary Consuls (PHC) on 01 February 2012 at the Philippine Embassy to map out their work programs for 2012.

In his brief welcome remarks, Ambassador Montealegre said that the planning exercise is in response to Secretary Albert Del Rosario's call for a reinvigorated foreign service that is not merely responsive to the needs of the more than 8 million Filipinos Overseas, but one that proactively prepares for the challenges of the future.

A powerpoint presentation focusing on the priorities of the Aquino administration and of the Department of Foreign Affairs, including the President's Social Contract, the Philippine Development Plan for 2011-2016, the concept of in-

clusive growth, and the three pillars of foreign policy were provided to the PHCs.

The planning session was attended by Mr. Nikolaos Margaropoulos, PHC in Thessaloniki, Mrs. Anastasia Manolopoulou, PHC in Patras, and Mr. Alexandrous Fasoulakis, PHC in Crete and Mrs. Shemaine A. Kyriakides, PHC in Nicosia, Cyprus, who participated via wireless phone patch.

All PHCs presented their proposed program for 2012, and expressed their full support for the economic diplomacy thrusts of the Department through increased trade representation, enhanced coordination with their respective Chambers of Commerce and promotion of Philippine and Greek trade fairs and exhibitions. They committed themselves to promoting the history, art and culture of the Philippines by arranging Filipino cultural performances and food festivals, and through enhanced engagement with the Filipino community in their respective areas.

The PHCs thanked the Embassy for the initiative to hold the planning session. They also assured the Embassy that they are ready to assist distressed Filipinos and to make representations with local officials to ensure the well-being

(Continued from page 1)....IST College

the British public University of Hertfordshire, wherein academic programs at IST College in Athens are offered in exactly the same way as the ones offered at the University of Hertfordshire in Great Britain and students are awarded with the same degrees.

The meeting between the Embassy and the IST College aimed to exchange information and explore areas of common interest, with particular emphasis on issues related to education and lifelong learning.

The meeting focused on how the Philippine Embassy in Athens and the IST College can work together to provide skills upgrading opportunities to Filipinos living in Greece through trainings and seminars, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate programs of study in fields such as nursing, IT, tourism, shipping, and pedagogical studies.



Embassy officials meet with the IST College officials held on 11 July at Moschato, Athens.

The meeting also discussed the possibility of organizing an event for the Filipino community in Athens.

Ambassador Montealegre thanked Dr. Fountoukakos and the IST College for the scholarships, which will benefit an increasing number of second generation Filipinos in Greece and those Filipino graduates who want to study in Greece.

A working group from the Embassy and the IST College was created to further study which areas to prioritize and how programs and projects can be implemented. ■

(Continued from page 1)...Amb. Montealegre meets



Ambassador Montealegre with Mr. Dimitrios Lakassas, Chairman of SEVE Greek International Business Association.

merce and Industry of Thessaloniki, Mr. Dimitrios Lakassas, Chairman of SEVE Greek International Business Association, Mr. Anastasios Tzikas, CEO of the Thessaloniki Inter-

national Fair, Mr. Spiros Pengas, Deputy Mayor for Culture - Education - Tourism of Thessaloniki, Mr. Konstantinos Zervas, Deputy Mayor for the Environment - Life Quality - Open Spaces of Thessaloniki and President of the Thessaloniki State Orchestra, and Mr. Vangelis Ioakimidis, Director and Member of the Board of the Museum of Photography of Thessaloniki.

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

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 against corruption. As a result, the Philippines posted a GDP of 6.4% in the first quarter of 2012 surpassing economic forecasts.

The local government officials and business leaders agreed to help co-organize a seminar on business opportunities in the Philippines in October 2012. They also agreed to hold exchange visits of businesspeople from the Philippines and Greece.

During his visit to Thessaloniki, Ambassador Montealegre also met with the officers of the Filipino Organization in Northern Greece to listen to their concerns amidst the challenges brought about by the economic crisis in Greece.

Thessaloniki is located in northern Greece and is the country's second major economic, industrial, commercial and political center, and a major transportation hub for the rest of southeastern Europe. It was the second lar-



(from right) Amb. Montealegre, Mayor Yiannis Boutaris, and PHC Margaropoulos.

gest and wealthiest city of the Byzantine Empire. ■

(Continued from page 1).... Amb. Montealegre

Aviquivil and Philippine Honorary Consul to Nicosia Shemaine Bushnell-Kyriakides.

During his audience with the President, Ambassador Montealegre conveyed to him the greetings of President Aquino, and congratulated him on Cyprus' Presidency of the EU Council for the second half of 2012. He expressed his commitment to forge even closer ties between the two countries, and the optimism for enhanced trade and people-to-people exchanges. He also thanked Cyprus for hosting over 20,000 Overseas Filipino Workers and expressed the hope that the Philippines-Cyprus Social Security Agreement could be signed soon for the benefit of both the Filipino and Cypriot people.

For his part, President Christofias cited the cordial bonds of friendship and cooperation that exist between the Philippines and Cyprus despite the distance that separates the two countries. He praised the Filipino workers in Cyprus and recognized their important contribution to a thriving Cypriot multicultural society. He also took the opportunity to discuss Cyprus' efforts towards achieving a solution to the Cyprus problem that would lead to the reunification of the country.

During the brief visit, the Ambassador also met with the Minister of Labor and Social Insurance Sotiroula Charalambous, Minister of Interior Neoclis Sylikiotis and the Head of MFA's C3-Asia and Oceania Directorate Panayiotis Papadopoulos to discuss social security benefits of Filipino workers in Cyprus, opening up the market for licensed Fili-



Shown in the photo are (L-R): PHL HonCon to Nicosia Shemaine Bushnell-Kyriakides, Chief of Protocol Ionna Malliotis, Foreign Minister Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, Ambassador Montealegre, President Demetris Christofias, First Secretary and Consul Charmaine Rowena C. Aviquivil, and Cypriot officials.

pino caregivers in Cyprus and various bilateral concerns.

Philippine Honorary Consul Bushnell-Kyriakides and POLO/OWWA-Nicosia with Labatt Romy Salud and WelOff Sylvia Valdez arranged a "kamustahan" with the Filipino community leaders in Cyprus where the Ambassador assured the Filipino community of the Embassy's commitment to support them and serve their needs.

The Honorary Consul also hosted a cocktail reception where the Ambassador had the chance to network with key players in the Cypriot business community to explore potential business and trade opportunities and promote the Philippines as an attractive investment and tourism destination.

Ambassador Montealegre likewise attended the New Year reception hosted by President Christofias at the Presidential Palace on 12 January. ■



Ambassador Montealegre with former Foreign Secretary Delia D. Albert and Cavite Provincial Board Member Ms. Irene Bencito at the Global Summit of Women 2012 held in Athens, Greece, from 31 May to 02 June 2012. A total of ten Filipino delegates from government, business and civil society participated in the Summit. ■

Ambassador Montealegre Meets with Cretan Gov't Officials and Business Leaders



Amb. Montealegre together with PHL HonCon Fasoulakis meets with HCCI President Manolis.

Philippine Ambassador to Greece Meynardo LB. Montealegre met with Heraklion Municipal Council Chairman Dimitris Karatzanis, Crete Regional Vice Governor Evripides Koukiadakis, and Heraklion Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Alifierakis Manolis during his official visit to Heraklion, Crete on April 23.

During his meetings, Ambassador Montealegre thanked the Regional Government of Crete and the city of Heraklion for their hospitality to around 300 Filipino workers and for allowing Filipino repatriates into the region during the 2011 Libyan crisis.

Ambassador Montealegre also explored areas of economic cooperation with the Cretan government officials and with the Heraklion Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"We believe that opportunities can be found during times of crisis," Ambassador Montealegre said during his meetings. He also highlighted the positive business confidence in the Philippines under the leadership of President Benigno S. Aquino III and his strong anti-corruption campaign.

Ambassador Montealegre also stated that with a population of more than 97 million people, the Philippines is a huge market for Cretan products. As a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Philippines can also serve as a gateway to the ASEAN market through the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA).

In all three meetings, Crete's officials and business leaders agreed to continue exploring ways to deepen cooperation with the Philippines in the areas of economic and cultural diplomacy.

Crete is the largest and most populous among Greece's numerous islands. It was once home to the Minoan Civilization, one of the oldest in the Western World. ■



From left: PHL HonCon Alexandros Fasoulakis, Mr. Dimitris Karatzanis, Chairman of the Municipal Council of Heraklion, and Amb. Montealegre.



Ambassador Montealegre meets with Minister of Labor and Social Insurance Sotiroula Charalambous and other Cypriot labor and social insurance officials, 11 January 2012.

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.



Pinoy Tenpin Bowlers in Athens 5th Anniversary. Ambassador Montealegre inducts the new set of officers of the PTBA during its 5th anniversary celebration on 07 January 2012 at Hotel Stratos Vassilikos.



Accredited Community Partners Oath-taking Ceremony. Ambassador Montealegre inducts the officers of the ACP on 09 February 2012 at the Philippine Embassy.



Pinoy sa Greece Contra sa Droga Launching. Embassy officials with some Filcom members during the launching of the Pinoy sa Greece Contra sa Droga on 11 February 2012, initiated by the Filipino community in Athens.



Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Incorporated Athens Chapter Induction of Officers. Ambassador Montealegre inducts the new set of officers of the PGBI during which was held on 12 February 2012 in Athens.



Sportsfest and Band Concert by the Unified Organizations in Athens. Ambassador Montealegre initiates the ceremonial toss for the official opening of the sportsfest held on 04 March 2012 at Fokianos Gymnasium for the benefit of disaster victims in the Philippines.



Embassy Sponsorship for Holy Week Mass. Embassy officers and staff sponsor the Holy Tuesday mass held on 10 April 2012 at the Miraculous Medal Center.



KASAPI Santacruzian Flores de Mayo Festival. Ambassador Montealegre together with Embassy officials during the Flores de Mayo/ Santacruzian held from 26 to 27 May 2012 at Fokianos Gymnasium.



Bagong Kapwa Ko Pilipino sa Athens Organization 20th Anniversary. Ambassador Montealegre delivers his short speech during the BKKPAO's 20th Anniversary held on 02 June 2012 at the President Hotel.



Philippine Cultural and Educational Academy Commencement Exercises. Consul General Charmaine C. Aviquivil awarding medals to honor graduates during the PCEA's commencement exercises held on 23 June 2012 at the Danaos Theater.



Filipino Community Academy Institute (FCAIA) Commencement Exercises. Consul General Charmaine C. Aviquivil delivers her speech during the FCAIA's commencement exercises held on 30 July 2012 at the Danaos Theater.



KAPHILCA Philippine School in Greece Commencement Exercises. Ambassador Montealegre together with OIC Mrs. Luz Ta-a awarding certificates to one of the graduates during the commencement exercises held on 24 June 2012 at the Danaos Theater.

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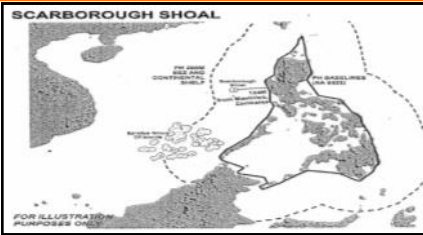
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PHL POSITION ON BAJO DE MASINLOC AND THE WATERS WITHIN ITS VICINITY



BACKGROUND ON THE BAJO DE MASINLOC (PANATAG) INCIDENT

Bajo de Masinloc is an integral part of the Philippine territory. It is part of the Municipality of Masinloc, Province of Zambales. It is located 124 nautical miles west of Zambales and is within the 200 nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and Philippine Continental Shelf.

A Philippine Navy Surveillance aircraft monitored eight (8) Chinese fishing vessels anchored inside the Bajo de Masinloc (Panatag Shoal) on Sunday, 8 April 2012, in the conduct of its maritime patrols and its enforcement of the Philippine Fisheries Code and marine environment laws. On 10 April 2012, the BRP Gregorio del Pilar, in accordance with the established Rules of Engagement, dispatched an inspection team that reported that large amounts of illegally collected corals, giant clams and live sharks were found in the compartments of these fishing vessels.

The actions of the Chinese fishing vessels are a serious violation of the Philippines' sovereignty and maritime jurisdiction. The poaching of endangered marine resources is in violation of the Fisheries Code and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

Town Hall Meeting with the FilCom on Bajo de Masinloc



The Philippine Embassy in Athens held a Town Hall Meeting on 06 May 2012 to brief the Filipino Community in Greece on developments with respect to Bajo de Masinloc.

During the Meeting, the Ambassador informed the FilCom on the basis of PHL sovereignty over Bajo de Masinloc (also known as Panatag or Scarborough Shoal), focusing on the fact it is 124 nautical miles from the nearest basepoint in Zambales province, and lies within the 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf of the Philippines. He traced the timeline of events since the 08 April 2012

The Philippine Embassy bids farewell to



Ms. Cielo L. Gamayon ended her tour of duty as the Secretary to the Ambassador and Attaché in Athens, Greece on 18 March 2012.

Ms. Gamayon started her government service in 1999 as Clerk in the Department of Foreign Affairs. Prior to her posting in Athens, she has been assigned in the Office of the Personnel and Administrative Services (Personnel Management Division) and Office of the Protocol and State Visits.

During her tenure as an Attaché, she actively participated and attended many Filipino community activities like volleyball and bowling tournaments..

Ms. Gamayon is a B. S. Psychology graduate of the Lyceum of the Philippines in 1998.

She was born on 28 March 1978 in Quezon City. ■



Atty. George Eduvala ended his tour of duty as the Embassy's Labor Attaché to Greece on 16 February 2012.

He started his government service in 1973 as Technical Assistant to Supreme Court Justice Felix Makasair, and transferred to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in December 1974 as Chief-Med Arbitrator.

He has been previously posted as Labor Attaché in Guam, Oman, Taiwan, The Netherlands, and Japan.

He extended assistance to many of the OFW in Greece. He actively participated in many Filcom events and provided them with different seminars concerning labor issues.

He received his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Santo Tomas and Bachelor of Law from San Beda College. He passed the 1972 Bar and was awarded SBC's Order of Sikatuna in 1973. He taught at the Arellano College of Law while working at DOLE. At the silver jubilee of UST's Faculty of Arts and Letters in 1991, he was among the recipients of the Outstanding Alumni Award.

He was born in 1947 in Masinloc, Zambales and is married with three children. ■

and welcomes ...



Ms. Maria Rizarem A. Apolonio arrived in Athens on 25 July 2012 to assume her duty as the Secretary to the Ambassador.

Ms. Apolonio entered the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1994. Prior to her posting in Athens, she was posted in the Philippine Embassy in Beijing, China from 2003 to 2009.

She served in the Department's Office of the Consular Affairs from 1994 to 2003 as Consular Clerk and Office of Asian and Pacific Affairs from 2003 to 2009 as Desk Assistant and Special Disbursing Officer.

She was a member of the DFA Chorale.

Ms. Apolonio is a B.S Foreign Service graduate from the Lyceum of the Philippines. ■



Third Secretary and Vice-Consul Sheila Marie C. Tario arrived in Athens on 26 January 2012.

Ms. Tario passed the Foreign Service Officer's Examinations in 2005.

Prior to her posting in Athens, she served in the Department of Foreign Affairs' Office of the Personnel and Administrative Services from 2006-2008 as Concurrent Principal Assistant in the Personnel Management Division and Concurrent Acting Director in the Honorary Consuls and Service Attaches Division.

She was also the Concurrent Assistant Board Secretary in the Board of Foreign Service Examinations in 2006-2008 and was detailed as Team Member to the Philippine Delegation for the Drafting of the ASEAN Charter in the Office of ASEAN Affairs from 2006-2008. She was likewise the Acting Director of the ASEAN Political Security Community Division from 2010-2012.

Vice-Consul Tario is an AB Management Economics graduate from the Ateneo De Manila University. She also earned a Masters Degree in Public Policy from the National University of Singapore (Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy). ■

incident involving the Chinese fishing vessels found inside the shoal. He also emphasized that the Philippines is committed towards working for a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the situation, including submitting this matter through international mediation under the auspices of UNCLOS/ITLOS.

All members of the FilCom expressed support for the steps taken by the PHL government and its strategy to submit the issue to an international body such as ITLOS/UNCLOS. They were also thankful for the Embassy's initiative to inform the community on an issue as important as this, and said that they look forward to receiving updates on similar issues.

A member of the organization KASAPI HELLAS invited everyone to join the worldwide protest by Filipinos in front of Chinese Embassies on 11 May 2012. ■

2012 Independence Day Messages of H.E President Benigno S. Aquino III and Foreign Secretary Albert F. Del Rosario



MESSAGE

It is my honor to greet my fellow Filipinos as we celebrate the 114th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence.

Once again, the Filipino people are writing a significant chapter in our history. Like all turning points in this narrative, this chapter is an outcome of collective will, manifested by our desire to fulfill our country's great potential, as exhibited by the ability, creativity, and fortitude of the Filipino. Our patriots embodied these qualities in all of their undertakings, particularly in their greatest enterprise – the formation of this Republic. Today we also take inspiration from our countrymen who demonstrate passion, excellence, and integrity in their chosen fields, thereby carrying on this legacy of solidarity and nationhood from our forefathers. As we celebrate our Independence, let it be our duty to reaffirm the values that have shaped and strengthened our nation, and to forge ahead in fulfillment of the destiny envisioned by our heroes.

Let us uphold the spirit of hope and confidence that complements the momentum of change in our time. May we also remain proud of our heritage and diversity, the foundations that distinguish our beloved Philippines. Inspired by the past we now commemorate, we move forward to establish a future that accords with our rightful place in the community of nations.

BENIGNO S. AQUINO III

MANILA
12 June 2012



Kagawaran ng Ugnayang Panlabas

Department of Foreign Affairs

MESSAGE

Commemorating Independence Day reminds us of the courage and struggle of the men and women who paved the way for the birth of our nation. Our ancestors made great sacrifices to witness that day in 1898, when the Philippine flag was raised and the national anthem was played to mark the proclamation of our nation's independence.

One hundred and fourteen years after, we are called to remain united and steadfast to the ideals of freedom and democracy. This year's theme, *Kalayaan: Pananagutan ng Bayan para sa Tugid na Daan*, prompts us to bear in mind that every Filipino, wherever he or she may be, has a role to play in the nation's development. Our hard-earned independence comes with responsibility to build a prosperous nation founded on truth, justice and equity.

Through good governance, the President is steering the Philippines towards rapid and sustainable economic growth, coupled with an improving quality of life for every Filipino. The Department of Foreign Affairs is one with the President in his pursuit to achieve inclusive growth for the country. In deepening our relations with other countries and engaging regional powers, the Department endeavors to advance national security and secure our territorial integrity, effectively address the needs and welfare of overseas Filipinos, and engage in a vigorous campaign to enhance economic diplomacy.

Love for country and deep faith in the Filipino people gave our heroes strength to fight for independence. As we celebrate Independence Day, may their patriotism inspire Filipinos, here and abroad, to become willing partners and dedicated collaborators of the government in attaining sustained growth and development.

Mabuhay at Maligayang Pagdiriwang ng ating Kalayaan!

ALBERT F. DEL ROSARIO
Secretary of Foreign Affairs

12 June 2012
Pasay City

(Continued from page 1)... Athens PE celebrates

associations also regaled the audience with cultural presentations such as the Maranaw Fan Dance, Bontoc War Dance, La Jota Moncadeña, Bulakalakan, Maglalatik, and the singing of patriotic songs such as Pilipinas kong Mahal.

Some 54 booths selling Filipino products and dishes and refreshments such as barbecue, dinuguan, pancit, lumpia, various kakanin, sago't gulaman and halo-halo were big hits to those who attended the event. The Embassy seized the opportunity to conduct field Overseas Absentee Voters (OAV) registration at its booth, with 25 Filipinos registering as OAVs. Overseas Welfare Workers Administration (OWWA) and Pag-ibig Fund also had booths providing services to the Filipino community. Over a thousand Filipinos are estimated to have participated in the event.

On Independence Day itself, 12 June, a flag-raising ceremony was held at the Philippine Embassy grounds. Ambassador Montealegre led the Embassy officers, staff and dependents in singing "Lupang Hinirang" and pledged allegiance to the Philippine flag with the recitation of the "Panunumpa sa Watawat."

On the evening of Tuesday, 12 June 2011, more than 250 guests from the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies, the diplomatic corps, Greek shipping companies and manning agencies, the academe, arts and culture enthusiasts, civic organizations, and the Filipino community leaders in Greece attended the diplomatic reception at the Athens Le-dra Marriott Hotel.

In his speech, the Ambassador recalled the heroic sacrifices that our forefathers made in order to attain the freedom and independence that Filipinos presently enjoy. In keeping with the theme, he reiterated the President's call for all Filipinos to take responsibility in ensuring that the nation takes the straight and narrow path to achieve its aspirations. He honored the achievements of Filipinos living and working in Greece, especially the fact that they are recognized and respected by the Greeks for their competence, dedication and genuine care and concern for their work. He announced the good news regarding the Philippine economy's robust performance, improved credit ratings, and its attainment of creditor status with the IMF after decades of being a user of IMF resources. He also cited the deepening relations between the Philippines and Greece

and his hope for strengthened cooperation in the economic, tourism, cultural, educational and maritime sectors.

The guests also enjoyed sampling different Filipino dishes such as longganiza, embutido, spring rolls, puto bumbong, "buchi" and puto.

The guests were very much impressed with the exhibit of Philippine furniture and home décor that the Embassy set up as a living room showcase at the hotel foyer. The exhibit blended antique and modern pieces from indigenous material that gave the guests an idea of what a contemporary Filipino *sala* looks like. Among the showpieces admired by the guests were a bench made of antique molave wood in modern Philippine design, a modern Filipino sofa set made from wood strips and fitted resin, antique wooden chair, side table, chest (bawl), and vase, stool made of banig, and wood strip-made coffee table with Philippine map. Unique pieces included a tara-pitse molave wood stand used as sugar cane crusher in olden times and a round antique wheel made of balayong Philippine hardwood used for kalesas. These were accented with décor made from coconut shell, mother of pearl, nautilus, abalone and capiz shells. ■

Diplomatic Reception



(Left to right) Exhibit of modern Philippine furniture and home décor at the diplomatic reception in commemoration of the 114th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence held on 12 June 2012 at Ledra Marriot Hotel; Embassy officers and staff; and Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre delivers his short message of hope and renewed confidence in the Philippines.



(Left to right) The Ambassador with Consul General Charmaine Rowena C. Aviquivil, Third Secretary and Vice-Consul Sheila Marie Tario, and Welfare Officer Leonor Mabagal; the Diplomatic Director of the Presidency of the Hellenic Republic, Amb. Haralambos Dafaranos; Chief of Protocol, Amb. Ekaterini Loupas; Diplomatic Director of the Parliament, Amb. Ioannis Christofilis, and MFA A10 Director Ambassador George Papadopoulos.



(Left to right) Ambassador Montealegre with his sister Mrs. Nora Montealegre-Gomez; Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador of Argentina Jorge Mastropietro; US Ambassador and Mrs. Daniel Benett Smith; Thailand Ambassador and Mrs. Preudtipong Kulthanan and Cyprus Ambassador and Mrs. Joseph Joseph.



(Left to right) Philippine Honorary Consuls Alexandros Fasoulakis (Crete), Nicolaos Margaropoulos (Thessaloniki), She-maine Kyriakides (Nicosia, Cyprus), and Anastacia Manalopoulou (Patras); Filipino community members; Embassy officers and staff.

Celebration with the Filcom



(Left to right) Filcom members getting ready for the parade during the Independence Day Filcom Celebration on 10 June 2012 at the Fokianos National Gymnasium; Re-enactment of the Proclamation of the Philippine Independence by President Emilio Aguinaldo; Members of the Accredited Community Partners sing the National Anthem; and Embassy officials with Fokianos President Mr. Evangelos Kytinos.



(Left to right) Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre reads the National Day message of President Benigno S. Aquino III; Filcom members showcase different Philippine costumes; PGBI Greece Chapter sings "Ang Barong Tagalog" song; and booth of the ACP members, who organized the event in coordination with the Philippine Embassy.



(Left to right) Filcom members presents Lulay Dance; Embassy officials together with the contestants of the "Pinoy Got Talent in Athens 2012; Kawanggawa committee drawing the raffle tickets.



Filipino community enjoying the traditional Filipino games and cultural presentations during the afternoon program.

The Philippine Embassy wishes to thank all the following committee heads and members for a job well done: Stage Set-Up Committee; Stage Decoration Committee; Sound System Committee; Booth Committee; First Aid Committee; Program, Invitation and ID Committee and its Pinoy Got Talent and Parlour Games Sub-Committees; Kawanggawa Committee; Finance Committee; Cleanliness Committee; Peace and Order Committee; and Parade Committee. THANK YOU.

Filipino Club Heraklion Celebrates 5th Year Anniversary



Ambassador Meynardo L.B. Montealegre delivers his remarks at the Fifth Anniversary of the Filipino Club Heraklion Crete.

The Filipino Club Heraklion Crete (FCIC) invited Ambassador Montealegre and the Embassy team to the fifth anniversary celebration of the FCIC held on April 22, 2012 at Dimotiko Theatriko Stathmo, Iraklio Crete.

Also present during the event was Honorary Consul Alexandris Fasoulakis and some Greek businessmen.

As the event's guest speaker, Ambassador Montealegre highlighted developments in the Philippine economy and invited the Filipino Community to invest in the Philippines. Ambassador Montealegre also mentioned the importance of the OAV mechanism in his remarks.

In addition, the Ambassador gave out certificates of appreciation to organizations and individuals for their invaluable support during the evacuation of Filipinos from Libya through Crete in March 2011. ■



Embassy officials together with HonCon and Mrs. Fasoulakis and FCIC President Mrs. Rita Lagen; Members of CIC performing Tinikling.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Philippine Embassy wishes to inform all incoming freshman Filipino students that the University of Indianapolis (UINDY) Athens Campus offers three types of scholarship namely: 1) Ambassador's Scholarships, 2) General Undergraduate Scholarships and 3) General Graduate Scholarships. The following are the available slots:

Ambassador's Scholarships:

1a. The Philippine Ambassador -Philippine School In Greece (PSG) Scholarship

One PSG graduate is qualified for undergraduate admission with a 70% tuition assistance.

1b. The Philippine Ambassador in Athens Scholarship (Undergraduate)

Five graduates from any Philippine high school are qualified for undergraduate admission with a 25 % tuition assistance.

1c. The Philippine Ambassador in Athens Scholarship (Graduate)

Five graduates from any Philippine university are qualified for graduate admission with a 25 % tuition assistance.

General Undergraduate/Graduate Scholarships:

2a. Any Philippine embassy & PSG employee, child/spouse of an employee (faculty/staff/administrator) is qualified for admission with a 20% tuition assistance.

2b. Any PSG graduate is qualified for admission with a 20% tuition assistance.

2c. Any sibling of a PSG student or graduate is qualified for admission with a 15% tuition assistance.

For more information please contact Mrs. Joanne David, Cultural Officer at 210671 8762.

OVERSEAS ABSENTEE VOTING REGISTRATION

**Boto Mo, Karapatan Mo, Gamitin Mo!
Magparehistro Para sa Halalan
2013**

REQUIREMENTS:

- Personal Appearance: submit self to biometric capture for photo, thumb print and signature
- Valid Philippine Passport or DFA certification in the absence of such
- Accomplish OAV Registration/Certification form
- For seafarers, a photocopy of seaman's book or proof of being a seafarer
- For Filipino who availed of dual citizenship the original or certificate true copy of the order of approval of application under RA 9225

WHERE:

YOU MAY FILE YOUR APPLICATION IN PERSON AT THE PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN ATHENS, GREECE AT #26 ANTHEON STR. PALEO PSYCHICO 15452 ATHENS,

**DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION:
31 OCTOBER 2012**

LIST OF FIELD/MOBILE OAV REGISTRATION

Crete : 26-27 April 2012

Cyprus: 26-27 May 2012

Zappeio: 11 June 2012

Corfu: 8-9 September

Cyprus: 14-16 September 2012

Piraeus: September/October (tbc)

Thessaloniki: October (tbc)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**TELEPHONE NOS: 210 672 1883/
1837/697 968 2921**



Embassy provides OAV registration to Filipinos during the 2012 Independence celebration with the Filcom held on 11 June 2012 at Zappeio Fokainos Gymnasium.

CONSULAR UPDATES**Athens PE Conducts Consular Outreach Services in Cyprus, Thessaloniki and Crete****The Embassy Consular Team at work.**

**Cyprus, 18 to 19 February and
26 to 27 May 2012**

The Philippine Embassy in Athens conducted two consular outreach missions in Nicosia, Cyprus on 18-19 February and on 26 to 27 May 2012.

The consular team, led by Third Secretary and Vice Consul Sheila Marie C. Tario, processed a total of 346 e-passport applications (including 15 lost passports) and 46 miscellaneous services (reports of birth/marriage, affidavits and certifications) during the February visit and processed a total of 625 ePassport applications and miscellaneous services and registered 214 overseas absentee voters. Services were also extended by Pag-IBIG during the May visit.

The consular outreach services were conducted with full support from Ms. She-maine A. Bushnell-Kyriakides, Honorary Consul of the Philippines to Nicosia, and volunteers from the Filipino community in Cyprus.

Thessaloniki, 04 March 2012



The Embassy Team with Honorary Consul Margaropoulos and the Filipino Community in Thessaloniki.

On 4 March 2012, the Embassy conducted a consular outreach mission in Thessaloniki with the full support of Mr. Nikolaos Margaropoulos, Honorary Consul of the Philippines to Thessaloniki, and the Filipino Organization in Northern Greece headed by its President, Ms. Violeta Mag-naye.

The consular team, led by Vice Consul Tario, processed a total of 48 e-passport

applications and 5 miscellaneous services (affidavits, certifications, and assistance-to-nationals).

In addition, services were also extended by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) through Welfare Officer Leonor Mabagal, and Pag-IBIG, through its Representative Jean Santos.

The Embassy team also had a meeting with the Filipino Community to address concerns relating to the challenges faced by Filipinos in Thessaloniki brought about by the economic crisis.

Crete, 21 to 22 April 2012

The Embassy conducted a consular outreach and Overseas Absentee Voting (OAV) registration in Heraklion, Crete from 21 to 22 April 2012 at the premises of the Philippine Honorary Consulate in Heraklion.

The consular team processed a total of 24 electronic passport (ePassport) applications and two miscellaneous services. The Embassy team also registered 11 overseas absentee voters.



Welfare Officer Leonor Mabagal and PAG-IBIG Representative Jean Santos inform the OFWs in Crete on their benefits as OWWA and PAG-IBIG Members.

Services were also extended by the POLO, through WelOff Mabagal, POLO Admin. Assistant Prado, and Pag-IBIG Representative Santos. WelOff Mabagal and PAG-IBIG Representative Santos informed the OFWs in Crete of their benefits as OWWA and PAG-IBIG Members.

The consular outreach was conducted with the full support of Philippine Honorary Consul to Crete Alexandros Fasoulakis and the Filipino Community in Crete. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT

Please be informed that:

- (1) the releasing of ePassports has been normalized; and
- (2) 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.

In view of the above, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs resolved to discontinue the extension of the validity of MRRPs-Green Passports.

However, the validity of the Machine Readable Passports (MRPs-Maroon Passports) which is expiring within six (6) months period or has already expired may be extended only once for two (2) years not beyond 31 October 2015 on the following conditions:

- Death in the family requiring the OFW and members of his/her dependent family to urgently travel to the Philippines;
- Medical emergency requiring the OFW and members of his/her dependent family to urgently travel to the Philippines or other country for medical treatment;
- OFWs returning to their employers abroad with valid employment contract processed by POEA;
- Application for ePassport has been filed at Post prior to the application for extension of the passport validity;
- Presentation of proof of urgency such as death certificate, medical certificate, valid employment contracts processed by POEA or Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) of Post together with plane tickets with confirmed flight details;
- Payment of consular fees for extension of passport validity.

In case of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) returning to the Philippines for good and whose work contracts were completed, residence visas were cancelled by their employers or immigration authorities of the host country, and if it is no longer necessary for them to file an application for ePassports at Post, a one-way Travel Document may be issued, with pay, instead of extending the validity of their passports.

Please note that applications for extension of the validity of passports of persons who will be traveling to the Philippines for **visit or tourism purposes** only shall not be given due course.

Joint 30th OWWA Anniversary and Labor Day Celebration



OFWs queue for the free health screening.

The Philippine Embassy together with the Philippine Overseas Labor Office and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration commemorated its 30th OWWA Anniversary and 2012 Labor Day celebration on May 6, 2012.

In line with the celebration, nearly 400 OFWs availed of the free health screening conducted at the grounds of the Philippine Embassy from 7:00 o'clock in the morning until 02:00

o'clock in the afternoon. Medical services include cholesterol, blood sugar and pressure determination, dental check-up and cleaning and vision check-up.

In the evening, the graduation ceremony of the seventy (72) OFW/students who have successfully completed the free Skills Upgrading Courses offered by POLO during the Winter Session 2012 took place at the President Hotel in Ambelokipi, Athens.

H.E. Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre was the guest speaker during the event. The officers and staff of the Philippine Embassy also attended the graduation ceremony as well as Filcom leaders, volunteer groups and individuals, representatives of partner institutions. ■



(top to bottom) Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre delivers his speech during the graduation exercises; Welfare Officer Ma-bagal reads the message of Administrator Carmelita S. Dimson for the 30th OWWA Anniversary.

BALIK MANGGAGAWA PROCESSING WITHOUT PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF OFW

The Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO)-Athens facilitates processing of Balik-Manggagawa papers even without the personal appearance of a vacationing overseas Filipino worker (OFW) who intends to secure Overseas Employment Certificate (OEC) prior to his/her departure from Greece.

This is a POLO-Athens office initiative to accommodate clamor from a number of OFWs based in far-flung areas of Greece for non-appearance in processing of their exit document, for convenience and economic reasons.

As such, a worker through his/her representative, submits to

POLO the following requirements:

1. Original or scanned copy of Philippine Passport (with at least 6 mos. validity period)
2. Valid copy of work/residence permit
3. Updated payment for OWWA membership (\$25 USD or its current Euro equivalent)
4. Updated payment for Pag-IBIG membership (not less than €5 Euro)

Further, OFWs who may return for good to the Philippines or transfer to another work destinations outside Greece are no longer required to process Balik-Manggagawa papers. ■



For more details please contact
Mrs. Jean V. Santos at tel. nos.
210 698 3265/ 693 7124 927/
697 742 5678



Pag-IBIG Representative Jean Santos assisting the Filcom members with their membership applications during the consular outreach held on 3-4 September 2011 in Rhodes, Greece.



Filipinos in Cyprus pay their membership contribution on 17 December 2011 in Nicosia, Cyprus.

CYPRUS CORNER

Filcom in Cyprus Celebrate "Araw ng Pasasalamat at Pagkakaisa"



Ambassador Montealegre together with PHL HonCon Kyriakides and WelOff Valdez pose with the Filcom during the celebration of the 114th anniversary of Philippine Independence and Migrant Workers Day on 01 July 2012 in Nicosia.

The Filipino Community in Cyprus celebrated the "Araw ng Pasasalamat at Pagkakaisa," on 1 July 2012, Sunday, from 10 am to 4 pm at the European University Cyprus in Nicosia. The event was jointly organized by the Philippine Honorary Consulate in Nicosia spearheaded by HonCon Shemaine Kyriakides and the POLO-OWWA Cyprus led by Labatt Romy Salud and WelOff Sylvia Valdez. The celebration also commemorated the 114th anniversary of Philippine Independence and Migrant Workers Day. The occasion likewise marked the graduation of 206 OFWs from various training programs and courses offered by POLO/OWWA in line with the government's reintegration program, namely: First Aid, Financial Literacy, and Computer Literacy. Various graduates from Limassol, Nicosia, Paphos, and Larnaca participated in the ceremonies.

Other activities held during the whole-day event were cultural presentations including dances (e.g. Ifugao, Cariñosa, Salakot, Kalinga Courtship, Tiklos and Subli) and performances by choral groups.

In addressing the group, Ambassador Meynardo LB. Montealegre honored the achievements of the Filipinos living and working in Cyprus, particularly the recognition and respect attained by the OFWs for their competence, dedication, and genuine care and concern for their work. He also announced the good news regarding the Philippine economy's robust performance, improved credit ratings, and its attainment of creditor status with the IMF after decades of being a user of IMF resources. Ambassador Montealegre likewise congratulated the 206 graduates from POLO-OWWA's

skills upgrading courses. The Filipino community warmly welcomed the good news from the Philippines, particularly its attainment of creditor status with the IMF. They expressed optimism that these developments will further continue under the leadership of President Benigno S. Aquino.

The event marked the first time that a Philippine Ambassador attended the POLO-OWWA Independence Day Celebrations in Nicosia. ■

PHC HELPS CDO TYPHOON SENDONG VICTIMS

The Philippine Honorary Consulate of Cyprus received a total cash donation of 610.00 euros or an equivalent of P35, 000.00 from walk-in clients who are mostly foreign agents and employers. The donation was collected from 19 to 23 December 2011 (for 1 week only).

A relief mission on 02 January 2012 for the victims of Typhoon Sendong was facilitated by the staff of the Philippine Honorary Consulate of Cyprus under the leadership of Honcon Shemaine Bushnell-Kyriakides and her assistant Eva Grace S. Ombid and consular staff Edroussel A. Escalera.

Volunteers from the Ombid, Escalera and Sarmiento families facilitated the purchase of relief goods for distribution. The beneficiaries were about 150 families from Gusa, Cagayan de Oro City and Macasandig, Cagayan de Oro City in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. Each family received pails, noodles, sardines, milk, coffee, sugar and biscuits. ■

News from Thessaloniki



The Filipino community in Thessaloniki represented the Philippines in the International Food Festival Food for Good 2012 which was held on 10 June at Plaz Aretsou in Thessaloniki.

The Greeks enjoyed the spring rolls, pancit and longganiza sold by the Filcom members. The group also presented a folkdance during the one-day event.

The Annual Festival was participated in by over 40 countries. ■



Filcom President Ms. Violeta Magnaye together with her members .



Members of the Filipino community in Thessaloniki perform a folk dance during the Food for Good 2012 festival.