

STATEMENT OF SECRETARY ROSALINDA DIMAPILIS-BALDOZ
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

DIASPORA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE –
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Panel I: Diaspora and Societies

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Theme: Diaspora and Development: Bridging Between Societies and States

Distinguished Ministers and guests, I thank Ambassador William Lacy Swing for inviting me to participate in this highly significant Conference.

Filipino diaspora covers the entire globe, scattered in 202 countries. We have an estimate of 10.5M Filipinos overseas, 4.5 M of which are contract workers, 4.9M are permanent residents, and the remaining 1M are undocumented. The USA is No. 1 home for permanent residents, while the KSA is the No. 1 host for our contract workers. Undocumented workers who are not registered under the Philippine system but are in possession of legal documents as allowed by the laws of the host countries, are mostly in Singapore and the UAE. Altogether, Overseas Filipinos constitute 10% of our population and contribute 8.5 % of the Gross Domestic Product, or US 22.8B in foreign remittance as of 2012.

Protection and welfare policy as basis for the Philippine migration management system from pre-employment, on-site employment and post-employment applies to contract workers. The system has gained

international recognition as model on contract labor management for labor sending countries. Based on our experience, the temporary nature of their stay require well defined areas of cooperation mutually agreed upon in bilateral agreements, supplemented by regional and multilateral arrangements to promote legal and ethical recruitment.

We have various agreements on the recruitment and deployment of our skilled workers, professionals, and service workers, with Germany, Switzerland, Japan, and some provinces in Canada, South Korea, and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, among others. In ASEAN, member countries have concluded Mutual Recognition Arrangements on engineering services, architecture, medicine, nursing and dentistry.

At the regional and multi - lateral levels, the Philippines has ratified all ILO core Conventions, the Maritime Labor Convention and the DOMWORK Convention, among others. We are party to the ASEAN Declaration on the Principles of the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families and active participant in the various consultative processes on migration like the Colombo Process, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, the Bali Process, and the Global Forum on Migration. The UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocol which have been ratified by the Philippines is enforced by the Trafficking In Person Law (RA 10364) and implemented by government-led convergence program.

Permanent residents, on the other hand, are fully integrated in the legal, economic, political and socio-cultural system of the host countries and enforcement systems are efficient and effective to protect their rights. The

current thrust of the Philippine government for those in countries affected by the global economic slowdown, is to encourage them to return home through a government - led reintegration program that provides credit and training facilities for start-up business. We leverage remittance by channeling them towards savings and productive investments, transfer and use of knowledge and skills, and network building among migrants. Returning Filipinos and migrant workers can access a P2B reintegration fund allocated from the Overseas Workers Welfare Fund and managed by government financial institutions.

As our economy expands with a growth rate of 7.8%, the fastest in Asia for 1st Quarter 2013, preceded by significant improvement in our global competitiveness and achieving first grade investment rating, we continue to focus on developing the local economy towards inclusive and sustainable job-led growth. Recently, we started to see investors in creative and gaming industries, who offer competitive wages and benefits attractive enough for OFWs to choose to return home and work in the Philippines, making migration a genuine choice, not an inevitable necessity, and with less social costs to their families. The strategy not to postpone any further development efforts to make our growth less dependent on foreign remittance is most opportune today for the Philippines than ever in the past.

President Benigno Aquino III cited that in whatever country the Filipinos work, they have been a force for good, contributing their knowledge, skills, caring and nurturing ways to their countries of destination, be it on times of peace or war or any emergencies. Our embassies and labor offices work

closely with the host countries and international organizations like the IOM for their safe evacuation and repatriation, whether by land, by sea or by air.

Migrant workers, especially contract workers, serve as the countries' ambassadors of goodwill. They respect the laws and culture of their host countries. As shared human resource to the world of work, their contribution to the economy and their socio-cultural assimilation and integration to the host countries, help strengthen the foundation of global peace, security and prosperity. Migrant workers deserve no less than fair and humane treatment and equal protection of their universally recognized rights under the principle of social justice and decent work for all. It is the pathway for diaspora and development to serve as bridge between societies and States.

Thank you and God bless.