

**REMARKS OF H.E. ALBERT DEL ROSARIO
AMBASSADOR OF THE PHILIPPINES TO THE UNITED STATES
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE
NORTH CENTRAL VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF
PHILIPPINE PHYSICIAN'S FOUNDATION (NCVAPPF)
Virginia, 24 September 2005**

Dr. Patricia D. Gonzales, President of NCVAPPF;

Other Officers and Members of NCVAPPF;

Officers and Members of the other component Philippine Medical Associations
from North Central, Southeast and Southwest Virginia;

Honored Guests; Friends;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my distinct honor and privilege to extend greetings and felicitations to you on the occasion of your 23rd founding anniversary. I am specially grateful for the opportunity to meet the members of the various Philippine Medical Associations from the different parts of the state of Virginia. The Philippines has truly distinguished itself for its contributions in the American healthcare industry as affirmed by the presence of so many Filipino physicians in this area. Through you and your service, our friendship with the United States is continually reaffirmed and strengthened.

We have seen this again in operation in the last couple of weeks as we called on our Filipino doctors, nurses, and other *kababayans* to volunteer in the relief efforts for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Being from the Philippines, we know a thing or two about disasters and the devastation and suffering that they bring about. The American people have seen us through some of these and we therefore would like to show that we are also ready to lend a helping hand in their greatest hour of need.

Katrina funds have been put up by the Philippine Embassy and the various Philippine Consulates in the United States. All checks received are being gathered and will be turned over to the American Red Cross as a collective donation of the Filipino American community. We are also currently discussing how our assistance can be embedded in the federal government's system of relief and rehabilitation operations. We are happy that as we assist as one community, we can concretely demonstrate the Filipino sense of civic duty, humanitarianism, and commitment to be a positive force in American society.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you, too, for your unflagging support for causes and projects that benefit the Philippines and our *kababayans* back home. It is heartwarming to note that tonight's gathering is dedicated to supporting Gawad Kalinga and its goal of building decent communities in the Philippines. The Philippine government is fully behind this important citizens' initiative that is creating so much impact in alleviating poverty in our country today.

DEVELOPMENT
ENERGY
SECURITY

1ST ASIAN LEADERS
1ST WOMEN
1ST PHILIPINES

TO CHAIR A SECURITY
COUNCIL SUMMIT.

In my opinion, Gawad Kalinga is really about harnessing the collective will and energy of all Filipinos, whether they are in the Philippines or abroad, to promote unity and nation-building. It is, I believe, the only Filipino movement today that is able to reach out globally wherever Filipinos can be found and bring them together to sustain the momentum for answering the cry of the poor and giving them a life of hope and dignity. Your efforts here are truly appreciated and greatly encouraged.

CANALIZING DEBT FOR EQUITY IN DEVELOPMENT
INTENSIFYING DIALOGUE TO DEAL W/ RUSHING-CHAUSIM
DIVIDE

Only a few days ago at the United Nations in New York, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo made a strong appeal for international collective action to address not only the relentless surge of terrorism but also the deepening cut of poverty, the burgeoning debt problem, and the soaring prices of oil. An innovative proposal was put forward by the Philippine government for a large-scale 50 percent conversion of debt for the Millennium Development Goal's anti-poverty financing programs. While we applaud debt relief for the highly indebted poor countries, it may be noted that there are many middle income countries like the Philippines that are also highly indebted and have large populations surviving on less than a dollar a day. This proposal primarily seeks to convert the debt service on principal amount into equities of new projects of at least equal value and with their own potential earnings.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives Jose de Venecia was in Washington this last week to get the support of American leaders, World Bank officials, influential opinion-makers, and the Filipino community to get this proposal off the ground. Our leaders have manifested dramatic initiatives in the coming weeks as the way to move forward after the conclusion of the divisive impeachment process.

I would like to inform you that President Arroyo is committed to a strong poverty alleviation agenda which focuses on improving education, employment, basic services, such as water and electricity, and infrastructure. Our Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) has been lauded by Jeffrey Sachs, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary General on the Millennium Development Goals, as among the best in existence.

In the first year of her administration, President Arroyo has moved aggressively to address the country's fiscal deficit problem. Measures are currently being undertaken to increase revenue and to reduce waste. We are also maintaining our reform drive in the finance, energy and power sectors. We are promoting exports and more foreign investment. Priority investment areas today include ICT, infrastructure and mining.

To increase these investments, I call on the Filipino community to help promote the Philippines as a premier global sourcing investment destination. Global

sourcing benefits both the Philippines and the United States. The Information Technology Association of America estimated it contributed US\$ 33.6 billion to U.S. GDP and created 99,000 American jobs in 2003.

Under the leadership of President Arroyo and of President Bush, we have seen how Philippine-American relations flourished across the board. We are allies in the war on terror. The United States is an important supporter of our Mindanao peace process as well. Fully two-thirds of USAID assistance, for example, is devoted to Mindanao.

We remain close economic partners. America has been our top export market and is cumulatively our biggest foreign investor. It is our biggest overseas tourism market and the single largest source of overseas Filipino remittances.

On this point, I appeal to business savvy Filipinos to take a lead in channeling remittances into productive investments back home. This is being done in other countries where it benefits both the investors and the economy.

The depth and extent of our relationship, however, is not limited merely to governmental and commercial relations. Our human bond is remarkable. Between 2.5 and 3 million Filipinos and Americans of Filipino descent live in the United States, while some 100,000 U.S. citizens are in the Philippines. The

Philippines and the United States are not just defence and security allies; we are allied democracies, sharing affinities of history, values and outlook.

As Filipino presence in America comes of age, you have shown that you have latent political strength that can be brought to bear on advancing both your empowerment and Philippine-American relations.

A Philippine Friendship Caucus has been formed in the U.S. House of Representatives. Currently numbering some seventy members, the Caucus is the first body of its kind ever to be organized on the Hill for the Philippines. It also reflects the rising visibility of the Filipino community.

Filipinos have done well in the United States. Surveys show that Filipinos in America are very productive, with a 75 percent labor force participation rate, higher than the American average of 65 percent. Of this number, 28 percent occupy managerial or professional positions, while 36 percent hold technical positions. Indeed, in America, a nation of immigrant achievers, Filipino immigrants like you have made tremendous achievements. With hard work, a Filipino can aspire to any achievement in this country. Glass ceilings and closed doors are no more.

In closing, let me say that we are looking forward to the Centennial of Filipino Immigration to the United States next year. This will be a celebration, spearheaded by the Smithsonian, of the Filipino-American journey to America.

Looking back, that journey has been impressive. In 1906, the first significant numbers of Filipino immigrants arrived in Hawaii to work on the island's sugar plantations. Until 1935, many more came as migrant laborers to West Coast farms and Alaskan canneries.

After World War II, some 7,000 Filipino soldiers received U.S. citizenship and, in 1945, the War brides Act permitted Filipino wives of U.S. military to immigrate.

The 1965 Immigration Act paved the way for Filipino professionals to enter the United States, many of them in the medical field. Today, Filipino-Americans constitute the second largest Asian-Pacific American group overall, second to Chinese-Americans, according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

Indeed, the Centennial of Filipino Immigration will be a fitting tribute to your special legacy, a legacy that would give pride to your children and to future generations.

On this note, I congratulate you once again on this anniversary celebration.

Thank you and good evening.