

**REMARKS OF H.E. ALBERT DEL ROSARIO,
PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
COURTESY CALL ON H.E. GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
BY THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE
1ST AMBASSADOR'S/CONSULS GENERAL TOUR
Malacanang Palace
14 July 2005**

Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo;

Honorable Secretary of Foreign Affairs;

Honorable Secretary of Tourism;

Our Consuls General;

Esteemed Participants of the Ambassador's/Consuls General Tour;

Other Honored Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Madame President, we are deeply honored to be received by you today on this first day of the 1st Ambassador's/Consuls General Tour here in the historic halls of Malacanang Palace. Together with our Consuls General from around the United States and its territories, I accompany today a delegation of over 500 Filipino-Americans and friends of the Philippines

who are part of what may well be the biggest homecoming organized for our kababayans in recent years.

Many in the Filipino-Americans yearn to revisit the Motherland, which they have not seen after having lived in the United States for many years, in some cases for decades. Taking advantage of improvements in Philippine tourism infrastructure, we joined hands with these Filipino-Americans to design this Tour to make it easier for them to visit the Philippines, and to help the Philippines while doing so.

The challenges facing Philippine tourism promotion are daunting, given our budget limitations and keen competition from our neighbors in the region. But, with the support of Filipinos in America, we have kept the American tourism market vibrant for the Philippines. The participants on this Tour will bring back with them good stories of their happy experience in their Motherland. Their positive message will spread among the community and its friends, and will reinforce the image of the Philippines as a safe, attractive and exciting country to visit.

We are, therefore, truly grateful to all the Tour participants. They have come over not just as ordinary tourists, but as our kindred kababayans, who want to assist the Philippines not just for travel, but also in trade, in investment and in promoting our country as an ideal haven for retirement and medical tourism. As many of the Tour participants are recognized leaders in the community, they are well-positioned to encourage greater future participation in the program.

I thank the Department of Tourism for taking the lead on the ground in implementing the Tour. In true country-team fashion, the Consuls General and Tourism attaches have worked together to generate the solid turnout that underscores the success of this initiative.

In addition, the Consuls General and I wish to thank our partners in the travel industry for their vigorous assistance in marketing and organizing the Tour. We were greatly energized by your enthusiastic response. Thanks to you, we can now be more confident that this initiative can be made into a more permanent program with broader global reach.

Madame President, please allow me now to present to you, by delegation,
the participants of this tour:

(in alphabetical order)

Delegation from Atlanta

Delegation from Chicago

Delegation from Ft. Lauderdale/Miami

Delegation from Guam

Delegation from Honolulu

Delegation from Los Angeles

Delegation from New Orleans

Delegation from New York

Delegation from San Francisco

Delegation from Washington, DC

Once again, on behalf of all our participants, our heartfelt appreciation for
Your Excellency's time and kind hospitality.

Maraming salamat po.