

# 20 23



DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
**ACCOMPLISHMENT  
REPORT**



BAGONG PILIPINAS





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the prime agency responsible for the pursuit of an independent Philippine foreign policy, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has been at the forefront of national efforts in the field of foreign relations, particularly in further strengthening the Philippines' engagements with its bilateral and multilateral partners, and in enhancing the image of the Philippines in the international community. The agency continues to persevere in performing its mandate to preserve and enhance national security, promote and contribute to the country's economic security, protect the rights and promote the welfare and interest of Filipinos overseas, and provide consular services wherever needed.

The DFA is also tasked to promote Philippine culture and arts globally as the public face of the Philippines abroad. The Department engages the Filipino people and foreign audience in various capacities to ensure that Philippine foreign policy is clearly articulated for the understanding and appreciation of the international community.

The DFA is run by 221 officers and 634 regular staff stationed in its headquarters in Manila; 629 personnel in 37 Consular Offices across the country; and 1,477 officers and regular staff in 94 Foreign Service Posts. Relatedly, 152 consular offices headed by Philippine honorary consular officers support Philippine Foreign Service Posts in the implementation of the Three Pillars of Philippine Foreign Policy. The Department also hosts 15 partner agencies that deploy 476 partner agency representatives to 218 overseas offices.

To adapt to the rapidly evolving global landscape, the DFA continuously ensures that its operations and personnel are equipped to be resilient and flexible as the Department faces challenging responsibilities, and explores new opportunities in an increasingly dynamic and unpredictable world.



# DFA AT A GLANCE

## MANDATE

*“The State shall pursue an independent foreign policy. In its relations with other states the paramount consideration shall be national sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest, and the right to self-determination.”*

(1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines)

*“The Department shall be the lead agency that shall advise and assist the President in planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and evaluating the total national effort in the field of foreign relations.”*

(Executive Order No. 292, s. 1987 - Administrative Code of 1987)

## MISSION

*To promote and protect Philippine interests in the global community.*

## VISION

*A resilient foreign service for a strong Philippines.*

## CORE VALUES

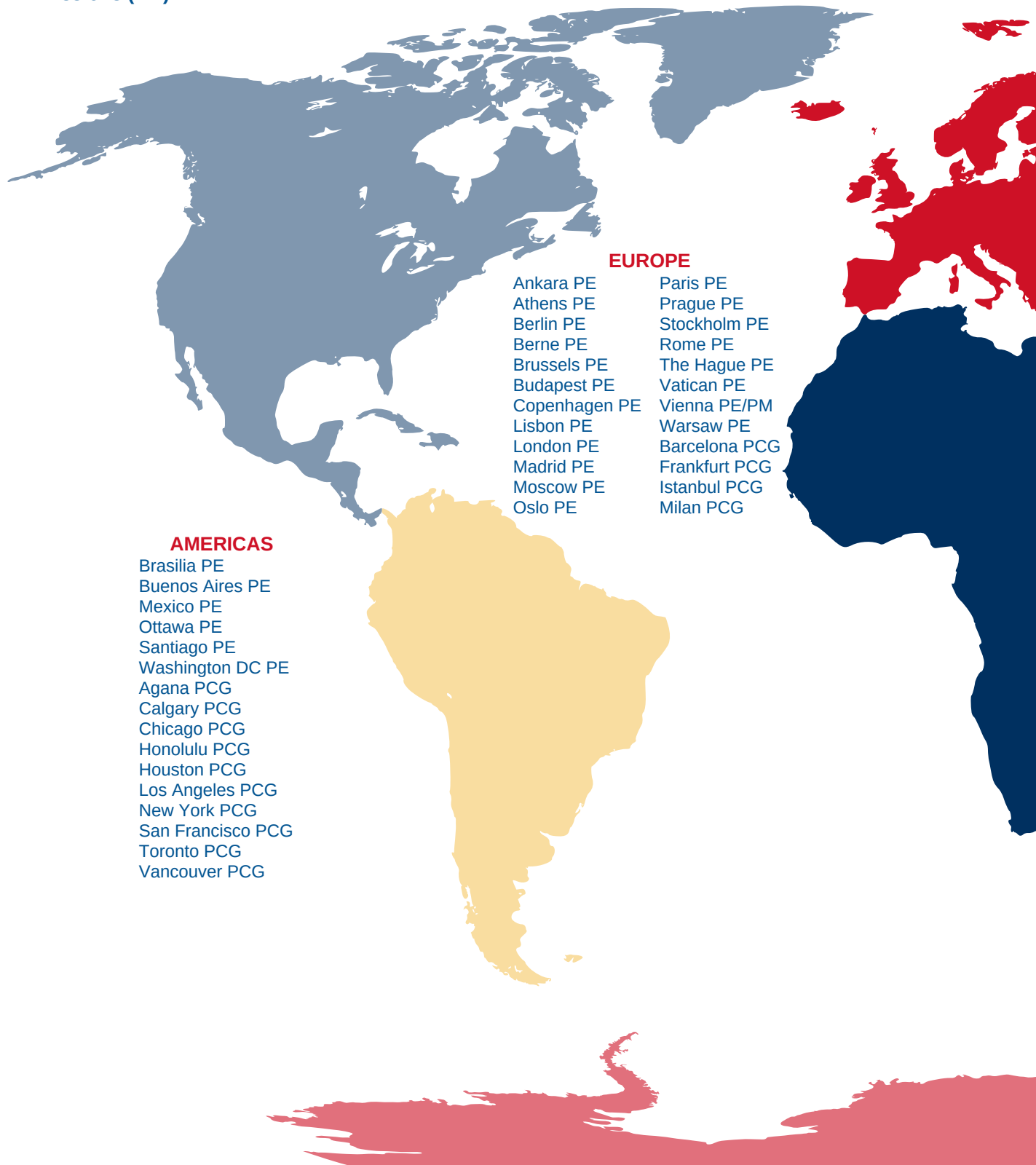
*Patriotism | Integrity | Professionalism | Excellence | Service*





# FOREIGN SERVICE POSTS

- 63 Embassies (PE)
- 27 Consulates General (PCG)
- 4 Missions (PM)

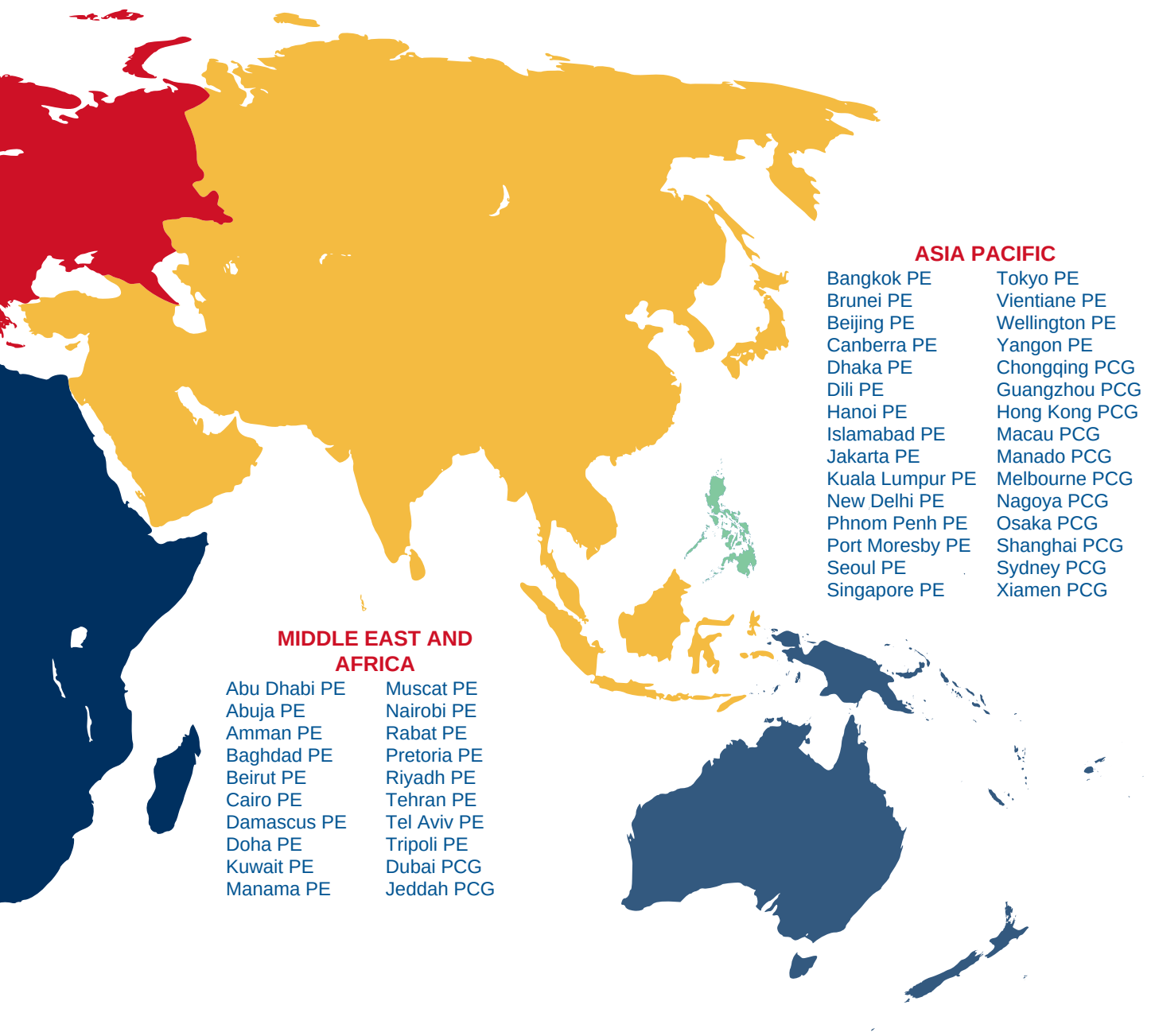


## AMERICAS

- Brasilia PE
- Buenos Aires PE
- Mexico PE
- Ottawa PE
- Santiago PE
- Washington DC PE
- Agana PCG
- Calgary PCG
- Chicago PCG
- Honolulu PCG
- Houston PCG
- Los Angeles PCG
- New York PCG
- San Francisco PCG
- Toronto PCG
- Vancouver PCG

## EUROPE

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| Ankara PE     | Paris PE      |
| Athens PE     | Prague PE     |
| Berlin PE     | Stockholm PE  |
| Berne PE      | Rome PE       |
| Brussels PE   | The Hague PE  |
| Budapest PE   | Vatican PE    |
| Copenhagen PE | Vienna PE/PM  |
| Lisbon PE     | Warsaw PE     |
| London PE     | Barcelona PCG |
| Madrid PE     | Frankfurt PCG |
| Moscow PE     | Istanbul PCG  |
| Oslo PE       | Milan PCG     |



**ASIA PACIFIC**

- Bangkok PE
- Brunei PE
- Beijing PE
- Canberra PE
- Dhaka PE
- Dili PE
- Hanoi PE
- Islamabad PE
- Jakarta PE
- Kuala Lumpur PE
- New Delhi PE
- Phnom Penh PE
- Port Moresby PE
- Seoul PE
- Singapore PE
- Tokyo PE
- Vientiane PE
- Wellington PE
- Yangon PE
- Chongqing PCG
- Guangzhou PCG
- Hong Kong PCG
- Macau PCG
- Manado PCG
- Melbourne PCG
- Nagoya PCG
- Osaka PCG
- Shanghai PCG
- Sydney PCG
- Xiamen PCG

**MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA**

- Abu Dhabi PE
- Abuja PE
- Amman PE
- Baghdad PE
- Beirut PE
- Cairo PE
- Damascus PE
- Doha PE
- Kuwait PE
- Manama PE
- Muscat PE
- Nairobi PE
- Rabat PE
- Pretoria PE
- Riyadh PE
- Tehran PE
- Tel Aviv PE
- Tripoli PE
- Dubai PCG
- Jeddah PCG

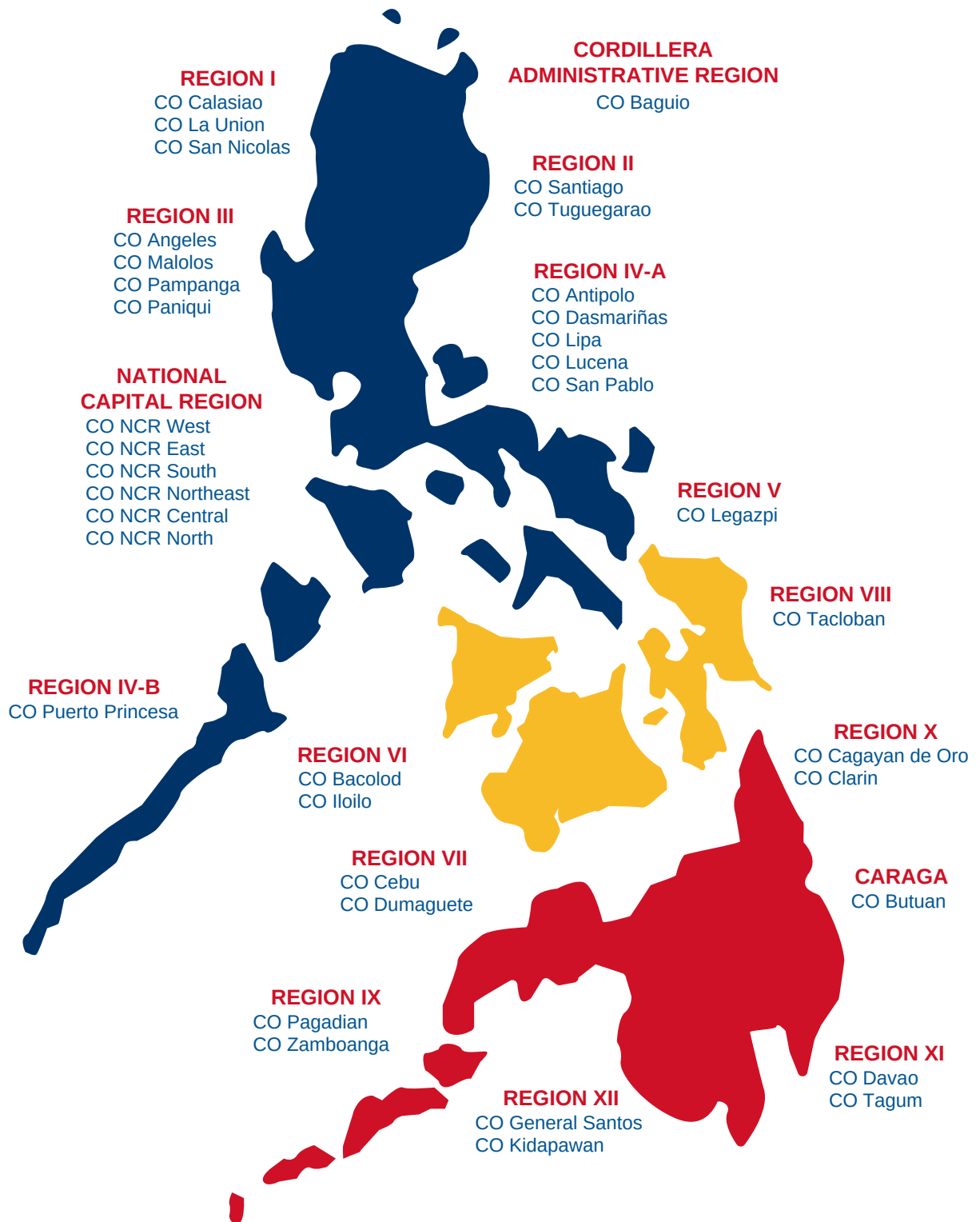
**PERMANENT MISSIONS**

- Geneva PM
- Geneva WTO
- Jakarta PM
- New York PM



# CONSULAR OFFICES

- 23** COs in Luzon
- 5** COs in Visayas
- 9** COs in Mindanao







# FOREIGN SERVICE PERSONNEL



**2,961**

## PERSONNEL OF THE PHILIPPINE FOREIGN SERVICE

**855**

### HOME OFFICE

221 Officers  
634 Regular Staff

**1,477**

### FOREIGN SERVICE POSTS

356 Officers  
1,121 Regular Staff

**629**

### CONSULAR OFFICES

629 Regular Staff





# 2023 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

# 2023 IN NUMBERS

## DIPLOMACY



bilateral engagements with  
**16** Heads of State/Government



including participation in **3** multilateral fora



**7** inbound leaders-level visits



**65** bilateral meetings  
**45** political consultations



**60** agreements or documents signed

## CONSULAR

**3,179,842** passports issued

Reduced passport processing time:

<u>Aseana and NCR COs</u> <b>10 working days</b> for regular processing <b>5 working days</b> for expedited processing	<u>COs Outside NCR</u> <b>12 working days</b> for regular processing <b>7 working days</b> for expedited processing
--	---

**95** Passport-On-Wheels (POW) services conducted



**142,293** visas issued



**532,994** Apostille Certificates issued



**64,420** Civil Registry documents processed

**1** new Consular Office established (CO Pagadian)

## ASSISTANCE-TO-NATIONALS



**4,811** repatriated Overseas Filipinos using the ATN Fund



**1,500** from Kuwait  
**568** from Saudi Arabia  
**507** from the United Arab Emirates  
**341** from Jordan



**7,588** OFs provided with welfare assistance



**2,310** OFs provided with legal assistance



**137** trafficking victims from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar assisted



**8th** consecutive year of Tier 1 status in the US Trafficking in Persons Report



**91,338** overseas voters registered

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



**26** internal audit engagements  
**0** non-conformities in third-party audit



**2,629** personnel who participated in LMS training courses



**167** wellness activities conducted



**19.10%** increase of budget for FY 2024 (PhP 3.91B)



**99.44%** utilization of cash allocation



**20** administrative inspections of FSPs and COs





## ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOME 1

# Foreign Relations Strengthened to Promote National Development and International Cooperation





## A. BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS

Consistent with the constitutional mandate of pursuing an independent foreign policy anchored on Philippine national interests, the DFA has engaged in a number of key bilateral and multilateral engagements in 2023, including:

### Leaders-Level Bilateral and Multilateral Engagements

#### **State Visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. to China, 03-05 January 2023**

The year 2023 opened with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s state visit to the People's Republic of China from 03 to 05 January 2023, at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The visit marked the first high-level engagement for 2023 and the first state visit to a country outside of ASEAN. The state visit resulted in the signing of 14 cooperation documents spanning the fields of economic and trade cooperation, people-to-people exchanges, infrastructure, and energy, among others. In addition, the Philippine delegation was able to secure USD 22.8 billion-worth of investment pledges from the Chinese private sector.



*President Marcos and Chinese President Xi Jinping during the welcome ceremony as part of the former's State Visit to China (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

#### **World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2023, 16-20 January 2023, Davos-Klosters, Switzerland**

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. led his economic team and the Philippine delegation at the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting 2023 held in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland on 16-20 January 2023 to present the positive state of the Philippine economy as seen in its growth rate topping the region's, resilient COVID-19 recovery, and strong performance in key sectors despite the global economic downturn.



*President Marcos during a one-on-one dialogue with WEF President Børge Brende (Photo courtesy of OP)*

In his interventions and remarks, the President highlighted the Philippines' structural reforms, liberalization agenda, refinements to its public-private partnership policies, and the administration's economic priorities as agents to facilitate and promote the Philippines as a lucrative investment destination and a global economic player. The President reiterated his call for cooperation not only among world leaders but also with the private sector, civil society, international organizations, and other stakeholders to attain food and energy security, digital transformation, and climate action in a resilient, inclusive and sustainable manner.

In heading the panel sessions on Nutrition Security and Investing in Infrastructure for Resilience, the President highlighted the Philippine initiatives in these areas, including the flagship "Build, Better, More" for climate-resilient infrastructure, logistics,





and connectivity that would address the urgent gaps in supply chains, food and nutrition, green energy supply, among others.

President Marcos, likewise, met with business leaders to pitch for business venture and expansion opportunities in the Philippines, and with international organization leaders to identify areas to align economic priorities and discuss ways to collaborate to further accelerate economic growth and address fundamental global issues, including supply chain disruptions, development challenges, and climate change. The President and his economic team took the opportunity to present the country's pioneering sovereign wealth fund as a means to achieve long-term financial stability while generating various welfare effects to Filipinos.

In his engagements with the WEF Chair and organizers, the President expressed support for WEF's overarching goals, and many of its initiatives, especially those that align with the Philippines' development agenda.

The theme of the WEF Annual Meeting in 2023 was "Cooperation in a Fragmented World".

**Official Visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to Japan, 08-12 February 2023**

The President traveled to Japan for an official visit, during which he had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Kishida Fumio on 09 February 2023 and an audience with The Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako.



*President Marcos and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida deliver statements in a Joint Press Occasion during the former's Official Visit to Japan (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

The visit further cemented the strong Strategic Partnership with Japan at a time of regional and global challenges in the areas of security, economy,

and the environment. It served as a platform in the discussion of future-oriented cooperation activities that apply high technology to further widen the scope of the Philippines' maritime domain awareness, achieve food security, develop a reliable energy supply, improve climate change adaptability, and facilitate the digital transformation of businesses and bureaucratic processes in the country.

The Philippines and Japan issued a Joint Statement that outlined the common resolve of both countries to work towards political and economic stability in the Philippines and Japan, as well as in the region and the world. A total of seven (7) agreements were signed during the visit.

**Official Visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to the United States of America, 30 April-04 May 2023**



*President Marcos meets with US President Joseph R. Biden Jr. at the White House (Photos courtesy of PCO)*

President Marcos successfully conducted an official working visit to Washington, D.C., USA from 30 April to 04 May 2023, which firmly welded the strong bonds between the Philippines and the United States. During his visit, President Marcos met with President Joseph R. Biden Jr., Vice President Kamala Harris, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin III, as well





as several other Cabinet officials as part of his expanded bilateral meeting with President Biden.

A Joint Statement was issued at the conclusion of the bilateral meeting between President Marcos and President Biden on 01 May 2023, which outlines the key initiatives that will be pursued across all areas of PH-US bilateral cooperation.

The Philippines and the US highlighted the need to bring about economic development to their people with over USD 3 billion in public and private investments from the US to support the Philippines' critical mineral supply chains, advance smart grid technologies, clean energy solutions, 5G deployment, and in the development of high quality and sustainable infrastructure projects. The two countries will convene working groups to discuss food security, civil space cooperation, technical aviation, energy cooperation, climate action on mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction, including ridge-to-reef cooperation, and further strengthen commitment to promote labor rights in recognition of the countries' shared values and commitment to democratic ideals.

**Visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to the United Kingdom, 06, May 2023**



*President Marcos and First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos greet UK King Charles III ahead of his coronation on 06 May 2023 (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

The President attended the coronation ceremony of His Majesty King Charles III of the United Kingdom at Westminster Abbey on 06 May 2023, and The King's Reception for Overseas Representatives at Buckingham Palace on the previous day, 05 May 2023. In the royal engagements, the President highlighted to the King the continued advancement of Philippines-UK relations, boosted by growing trade, investments and cultural exchanges between

the two countries.

During the King's reception, the President also met with UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak who invited the President to visit the UK for a longer meeting after the two discussed bilateral economic opportunities. Prime Minister Sunak expressed gratitude for Filipino workers, who are essential in the UK especially during the pandemic.

The President also met with representatives of Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP), one of the world's largest infrastructure investors, to discuss potential partnership in the development of world-class airport infrastructure, technology and operations.

**42nd ASEAN Summit, 10-11 May 2023, Labuan Bajo, Indonesia**

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. participated in seven (7) Leaders'-level Meetings at the 42nd ASEAN Summit held on 10-11 May 2023 in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia.



*President Marcos attended the 42nd ASEAN Summit at the invitation of the ASEAN 2023 Chair, President Joko Widodo (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

The 42nd ASEAN Summit (Plenary Session) discussed ASEAN's community-building efforts under the theme of Indonesia's Chairship, "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth". At the said plenary session, President Marcos welcomed Indonesia's ASEAN Chairship priority of strengthening regional cooperation to address cross-border crimes, particularly trafficking in persons caused by the misuse of technology, and to mainstream the protection of migrant workers and their families in crisis situations.

President Marcos also announced at the plenary that the Philippines deposited its Instrument of Ratification for the Regional Comprehensive



### Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement.

On the South China Sea, the President emphasized that the Philippines will remain firm in upholding and protecting our entitlements under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and urged all countries to abide by the 1982 UNCLOS and to ensure that the South China Sea does not become a nexus for armed conflict.

This is the first ASEAN Summit that Timor-Leste attended as an Observer following the ASEAN Leaders' decision in 2022 to admit Timor-Leste, in principle, as the 11th member of ASEAN.

### **Official Visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, 01-02 March 2023, and State Visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to Malaysia, 25-27 July 2023**

The year 2023 marked two high-level visits between Philippine and Malaysian leaders.

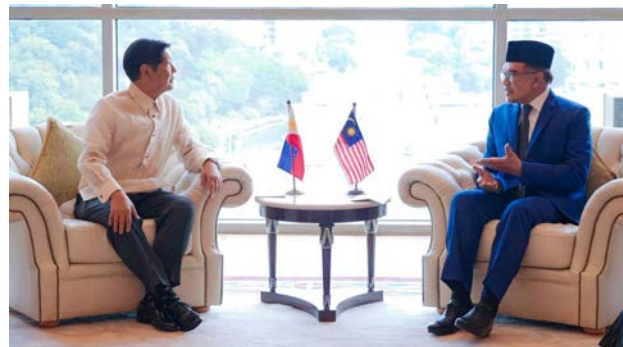
Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim undertook his official visit to the Philippines on 01-02 March 2023. The Malaysian Prime Minister is the first Head of Government to visit the Philippines during President Marcos' administration.

During their restricted and expanded bilateral meetings, the two leaders engaged in cordial and productive discussions on bilateral cooperation spanning political and security, economic, and people-to-people ties. They also exchanged views on issues that continue to affect the region, such as the South China Sea and the situation in Myanmar.

A few months after Prime Minister Anwar's official visit, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. undertook his state visit to Malaysia on 25-27 July 2023.

President Marcos had an audience with His Majesty Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah Ibni Almarhum Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Al-Musta'in Billah, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong XVI (King) of Malaysia on 26 July 2023. The Malaysian King also hosted a state banquet in honor of the President and the Philippine delegation.

President Marcos also had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Anwar at the Prime Minister's Office in Putrajaya on 26 July 2023. Discussions revolved around the convening of the Joint Commission Meeting, as well as exploring synergies for future partnerships in political, economic and people-to-people ties. Both Leaders also discussed regional and international issues of mutual interests.



*Bilateral meeting between President Marcos and Malaysian Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim during the former's State Visit to Malaysia (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

The visit resulted in at least USD 285 million worth of investment commitments, related to food processing, multi-service digital platforms, aviation, aviation maintenance support services, logistics, manufacturing, infrastructure, and water and wastewater treatment joint undertakings, in the form of Memoranda of Agreement and Memoranda of Understanding by Philippine companies and entities with their Malaysian counterparts which were also presented to the President. These would spur trade and investment opportunities in agriculture, achieve clean energy sustainability as well as facilitate regional trade through digital solutions.

### **Official Visit to the Philippines of Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, 07-08 September 2023**

On 07-08 September 2023, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese undertook an official visit to Manila, where he and President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. signed the Joint Declaration on a Strategic Partnership. During that visit, the



*President Marcos signs the guestbook ahead of his audience with Malaysian King Al-Sultan Abdullah (Photo courtesy of PCO)*





Memorandum of Understanding on a Work and Holiday Visa Arrangement, as well as the Memorandum of Understanding on Soil Health Technology were also signed.



*President Marcos and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese sign the Joint Declaration on a Strategic Partnership during the latter's official visit to the Philippines (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

**State Visit to the Philippines of Timor-Leste President José Ramos-Horta, 10 November 2023**



*President Marcos and Timor-Leste President José Ramos-Horta hold a Joint Press Conference during the latter's State Visit to the Philippines (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

President José Ramos-Horta of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste undertook his state visit to the Philippines on 08-11 November 2023.

During the bilateral meeting between President Marcos and President Ramos-Horta on 10 November 2023, the two leaders recalled the long history of solidarity and support of the Philippines for Timor-Leste, especially during the critical period that helped to restore peace and stability in Timor-Leste following the referendum in 1999.

President Marcos recognized the many potential areas for bilateral cooperation, such as air services,

social security, defense, health, higher education, and visa waiver. On technical cooperation, the two leaders discussed plans to address the socio-economic challenges in Timor-Leste. President Marcos expressed the Philippines' readiness to provide capacity building projects for Timor-Leste, in consideration of Philippine expertise and the needs of Timor-Leste, as part of the Philippines' contributions to support the early realization of Timor-Leste's ASEAN membership. They also directed their relevant agencies to discuss further details to ensure the successful implementation of these projects.

President Marcos reiterated the Philippines' long-standing support for Timor-Leste's admission as a full member of ASEAN. President Ramos-Horta expressed gratitude and provided updates on its efforts and progress in implementing the Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN. Meanwhile, President Ramos-Horta reaffirmed Timor-Leste's support for the bid of the Philippines as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the term 2027-2028.

President Marcos and President Ramos-Horta also exchanged views on regional and international issues, including developments in the South China Sea/West Philippine Sea.

**43rd ASEAN Summit and Related Summits, 05-07 September 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia**



*President Marcos during his intervention at the 43rd ASEAN Summit (Retreat Session) on 05 September 2023 (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. participated in twelve (12) Leaders'-Level Meetings at the 43rd ASEAN Summit and Related Summits on 05-07 September 2023 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Regular Summits between the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea and the US



were convened, along with the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) and the East Asia Summit (EAS). A one-off summit was also convened with Canada to elevate ASEAN-Canada Dialogue Relations to a Strategic Partnership.

At the 43rd ASEAN Summit, the ASEAN Leaders discussed the need to enhance regional efforts towards ASEAN's digital transformation and digital economy, enhance economic integration through the upgrade of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), address climate change, promote green and blue economy, and accelerate energy transition and regional energy connectivity.

Following consultations with ASEAN Member States, President Marcos also announced that the Philippines' will take on the Chairship of ASEAN in 2026, instead of in 2027, to ensure the continuity of ASEAN's progress towards a people-oriented, people-centered, inclusive and rules-based ASEAN Community.

The Philippines consistently highlighted at the rest of ASEAN meetings, among others, the urgent need to strengthen cooperation on food and energy security, harness the potential of digital and creative industries, bolster support for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as well as address and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

President Marcos joined Indonesia and the whole ASEAN Member States in strengthening regional cooperation to address cross-border crimes, particularly trafficking in persons caused by the misuse of technology, and to mainstream the protection of migrant workers, including overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and their families in crisis situations.

The President had very constructive and productive discussions with ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners on wide-ranging issues across the political, economic and socio-cultural pillars, including important regional and global issues of mutual concern, such as the South China Sea, the situation in Myanmar, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and the conflict in Ukraine, among others.

On the sidelines of the 43rd ASEAN Summit and Related Summits, the President had bilateral meetings with the Leaders of Cambodia, Canada, Cook Islands, India, ROK, and Viet Nam, as well as

with the President of the World Bank Group where they had productive discussions. He also held informal talks with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and US Vice President Kamala Harris on strengthening cooperation in key areas of mutual interest.

The President also met with top executives of select Indonesian companies who are looking to further expand their presence in the Philippines, and secured USD 22 million investment commitments in areas crucial for the country's economic recovery efforts such as in agriculture and the digital economy.

In addition, President Marcos witnessed the signing of the PH-ROK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) which demonstrated the commitment of both countries to mutual economic growth and development.

***ASEAN-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit, 19-21 October 2023, and Meeting with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the sidelines of the ASEAN-GCC Summit, 20 October 2023 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia***



*President Marcos called on ASEAN and GCC countries to work together in promoting peace, security and stability in the South China Sea and the Arabian Sea (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

The President attended the inaugural ASEAN-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit on 19-21 October 2023 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which reaffirms the Philippines' commitment to the partnership between the ASEAN and GCC countries. The summit provided a venue for these countries to discuss regional and international issues that affect both regions, with the Philippines projecting its long-standing promotion of a rules-based international order. The summit was also an opportunity for the Philippines to encourage investors to invest in the country. In particular,





business-to-business agreements were secured and these will provide additional employment to the Philippine labor force across a wide range of industries including healthcare; hotel, restaurant, and catering; and maintenance and operations, among other operations.

At the sidelines of the ASEAN-GCC Summit, the President met His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on 20 October 2023.



*President Marcos and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

The President and the Crown Prince discussed enhancing trade and investment relations, primarily through the Maharlika Investment Fund and business-to-business engagements. The President highlighted the Philippines' willingness to assist in supplying skilled workers and professionals to the Kingdom, and expressed keenness to cooperate with and help Saudi Arabia achieve food security.

**APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, 17 November 2023, San Francisco, California, USA**



*President Marcos with APEC Economic Leaders during the Leaders' Meeting chaired by US President Joseph R. Biden Jr. (Photo courtesy of APEC Secretariat)*

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. led the Philippine delegation to the Asia-Pacific Economic

Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting on 17 November 2023 in San Francisco, California, USA. During the meeting, US President Joseph R. Biden Jr. announced that the leaders of 21 APEC Member Economies have reached consensus on the APEC 2023 Golden Gate Declaration, under the US chairmanship theme of "Creating a Resilient and Sustainable Future for All" with a focus on interconnectedness, innovation and inclusion.

The Declaration takes off from the outcome documents of previous APEC Leaders Meetings such as the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 and the Aotearoa Plan of Action which envision the region as an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific by 2040 for the prosperity of future generations. Furthermore, the US, as this year's APEC host, builds on APEC's Bangkok Goals on the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy, which established the goal of progressing sustainable and inclusive economic policies and practices while ensuring they also address environmental challenges.

Economy Leaders also welcomed the San Francisco Principles on Integrating Inclusivity and Sustainability into Trade and Investment Policy, as well as Ministerial-level outcomes of the 2023 sectoral meetings for transportation, trade, disaster management, food security, health and economy, energy, women and economy, MSMEs, and finance, including principles on the non-binding just energy transition and for achieving food security through sustainable agri-food systems in the APEC region.

**Working Visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to California and Hawaii, USA, 14-19 November 2023**

The President's working visits to San Francisco and Los Angeles, California, USA and Honolulu, Hawaii, USA from 14 to 19 November 2023 provided yet another important platform for further advocating for and bringing to fruition the Philippine's key defense and economic priorities in its cooperation with the US. While in San Francisco, the President met separately with US Vice President Kamala Harris and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The President also met with the Filipino Community in San Francisco and Los Angeles in California and Honolulu, Hawaii.

In the 5-day working visit to the US, the President,



together with his economic team, also met with the private sector and witnessed the signing of five (5) public-private agreements on clean energy, healthcare, pharmaceutical, internet connectivity and climate technology, generating about USD 670 million in investment pledges that have the potential to create thousands of direct and indirect jobs for Filipinos.



*President Marcos meets with US Vice President Kamala Harris at the sidelines of the 2023 APEC Leaders Meeting (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

In Honolulu, Hawaii, the President met with US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) Commander Admiral John Aquilino and had a speaking engagement at the Daniel K. Inouye Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI APCSS) on his views on the most crucial challenges to common aspirations of a peaceful and prosperous future for the Philippines and the region—securing the peace in the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea and securing strategic sectors and critical infrastructures, including cyber.



*President Marcos receives Arrival Honors at the USINDOPACOM Headquarters (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

**Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, 17 December 2023, Tokyo, Japan**

President Marcos delivered three (3) interventions

for agenda items on (1) Review of ASEAN-Japan Relations, Partners for Peace and Stability and Regional and International Issues, (2) Heart to Heart Partners across Generations, and (3) Partners for Co-creation of Economy and Society of the Future.



*President Marcos delivered three (3) interventions during the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit (Photo courtesy of PCO)*

During the Agenda on Review of ASEAN-Japan Relations, Partners for Peace and Stability and Regional and International Issues, the President emphasized that trust is the basis of peace, a trust based on deeds and not merely words as ASEAN and Japan face common yet complex challenges together. The President also looked forward to future cooperation toward enhancing resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems through new technologies and innovation to ensure regional food security.

For the Heart to Heart Partners across Generations, the President expressed gratitude to the Japanese Government for its commitment and steadfast support for numerous initiatives promoting friendship and camaraderie among the peoples of ASEAN and Japan. He recognized the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) Program as well as the WA Project and looked forward to ASEAN's and Japan's continued partnership beyond the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation.

Lastly, for the Agenda on Partners for Co-creation of Economy and Society of the Future, the President expressed hope that through the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and the RCEP Agreement, ASEAN and Japan will usher in closer trade and investment links between and among Japan and 14 signatory countries. The President expressed confidence that the ASEAN-Japan partnership will continue to grow





and expand with the AJCEP Agreement and RCEP in place. On sustainable energy security, the President encouraged ASEAN Member States and Japan to undertake novel joint ventures to reduce carbon emissions, promote renewable energy, and enhance environmental sustainability. The President also reiterated the Philippines' interest in hosting the Headquarters of the Board of the Loss and Damage Fund created during the 28th Session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COP 28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

During the Commemorative Summit, two (2) Outcome Documents were noted: Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation "Trusted Partners"; and Implementation Plan of the Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation "Trusted Partners".

**The Philippines in ASEAN**

**32nd ASEAN Coordinating Council Meeting and ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat, 03-04 February 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia**



*Secretary Manalo joins other ASEAN Foreign Ministers during the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat (Photo courtesy of the ASEAN Secretariat)*

During an exchange of views with fellow ASEAN Foreign Ministers at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat on 03-04 February 2023 in Jakarta, Indonesia, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo reiterated the Philippines' call for the complete and speedy implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) on Myanmar. He also expressed the Philippines' support to the Chair in developing an implementation plan for the Five-Point Consensus.

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers also met at the 32nd ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) Meeting on 03 February 2023. During the meeting, Secretary Manalo supported the adoption of the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Observer Status Granted to Timor-Leste in ASEAN, as well as the development of an objective, criteria-based roadmap for Timor-Leste's full membership in ASEAN.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste, Adaljiza Xavier Reis Magno, attended the meetings as an observer. This is the first time that Timor-Leste has participated in ASEAN meetings since the ASEAN Leaders agreed, in principle, to admit Timor-Leste as the 11th member of ASEAN during the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits in November 2022.

The meetings were the first for the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in 2023. These were also the first Minister-level meetings attended by the new ASEAN Secretary-General, Dr. Kao Kim Hourn.

**34th ASEAN Matters Technical Board Meeting, 03 March 2023, Manila**



*Participants of the 34th AMTB Meeting (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

The DFA-Office of ASEAN Affairs convened the 34th ASEAN Matters Technical Board (AMTB) Meeting on 03 March 2023 to discuss and strengthen Philippine priorities in ASEAN.

Over 80 participants from 39 partner agencies representing the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Pillars attended the Meeting. It was the first AMTB Meeting of 2023.

The Office of ASEAN Affairs briefed the meeting on political-security developments and external relations of ASEAN, while the Department of Trade





and Industry (DTI) and Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) provided updates on ASEAN economic and socio-cultural developments, respectively.

Ambassador Hjayceelyn M. Quintana, the Philippine Permanent Representative to ASEAN, and Ambassador Elizabeth P. Buensuceso, Philippine Eminent Person to the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision (HLTF-ACV), likewise delivered key messages and shared updates on the upcoming work of the Committee of the Permanent Representatives (CPR) and the HLTF-ACV, respectively.

**Second ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on Nuclear Risk Reduction, 22-23 March 2023, Brisbane, Australia**



*Participants of the 2nd ARF Workshop on Nuclear Risk Reduction (Photo courtesy of Australian DFAT)*

The Philippines co-chaired with Australia the 2nd ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Workshop on Nuclear Risk Reduction on 22-23 March 2023, where participants underlined the need to reduce risks associated with the use of nuclear weapons.

Assistant Secretary for United Nations and Other International Organizations Kira Christianne Danganan-Azucena served as Philippine co-chair for the Workshop, alongside Australian Ambassador for Arms Control and Counter-Proliferation Ian Biggs.

In a country statement, the Philippines emphasized that nuclear risk may be eliminated only if nuclear weapons cease to exist. Efforts to reduce nuclear risk should therefore not legitimize the existence of nuclear weapons nor serve as a substitute for tangible progress in fulfilling nuclear disarmament obligations.

The Workshop featured expert panel discussions

on nuclear risk reduction and current prospects for disarmament, both globally and from the ASEAN regional perspective. Participants also discussed measures that ARF members may consider implementing to reduce nuclear risk.

Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Carlos D. Sorreta provided a pre-recorded keynote message for the Workshop, where he highlighted the ARF as an ideal platform to advance cooperation in reducing nuclear risk: "The ARF continues with its work, bringing together parties to some of the world's longest-standing conflicts and flashpoints. The ARF, like many other ASEAN-led mechanisms, is a testament to the convening power of ASEAN."

**ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 26th ASEAN Political Security Community Council Meeting, and 33rd ASEAN Coordinating Council Meeting, 09 May 2023, Labuan Bajo, Indonesia**



*Secretary Manalo joins other ASEAN Foreign Ministers during the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Photo courtesy of the ASEAN Secretariat)*

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo stated at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) that ASEAN must channel the greater interest of the international community into high-quality engagements, and that ASEAN must seek ways on how to project our Centrality outward, in order to matter to the larger region and the world, for example, by championing the principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC).

During the 26th APSC Council Meeting, the ASEAN Secretariat provided a briefing on the implementation of the APSC Blueprint, and proposed that it conduct a seminar for stakeholders of the four (4) remaining action lines on possible ways forward, as the current Blueprint ends in 2025. Secretary Manalo posited that the ASEAN Leaders may wish to provide the mandate for



specific ASEAN Sectoral Bodies to take on the remaining action lines.

Secretary Manalo highlighted the two (2) priorities of the Philippines in the APSC pillar, namely (1) combating trafficking in persons, and (2) maritime security, noting the Philippines' hosting of the 12th ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) and 10th Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) in December 2022, and commitment to the negotiations for a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC).

At the 33rd ACC Meeting, the Foreign Ministers endorsed the Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN, for adoption by the Leaders at the 42nd ASEAN Summit. The Roadmap will set out milestones for Timor-Leste to achieve, as well as ASEAN agreements that Timor-Leste needs to accede to in preparation for its full membership to ASEAN.

The Philippines' proposal to include a list of capacity-building areas for Timor-Leste, which was identified in the Fact-Finding Missions to Timor-Leste by the ASEAN Community Pillars, was annexed to the Roadmap to serve as a guide or reference.

**56th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Related Meetings, 11-14 July 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia**



*Secretary Manalo joins other ASEAN Foreign Ministers during the 56th AMM and Related Meetings (Photo courtesy of the ASEAN Secretariat)*

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo highlighted Philippine strategic priorities in ASEAN, such as maritime security and cooperation, the Philippine candidature to the UN Security Council, countering trafficking in persons, and ASEAN Centrality, among others during a week-long 56th AMM and Related Meetings held in Jakarta,

Indonesia on 11-14 July 2023.

During the Foreign Ministers-level meetings among ASEAN and with external partners, including in the 30th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 24th APT Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 13th EAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences (PMC) with ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, namely, the European Union, India, New Zealand, Russia, Australia, Japan, ROK, United Kingdom, Canada, and US, Secretary Manalo reiterated that the 1982 UNCLOS and the 2016 Arbitral Award remain the twin anchors of the Philippines' policy in the South China Sea. Secretary Manalo also thanked ASEAN's partners that have supported the Arbitral Award, which marked its 7th anniversary on 12 July 2023.

At the 13th EAS FMM, held on 14 July 2023, Secretary Manalo urged EAS Participating Countries to continue supporting ASEAN Centrality, the ASEAN-led regional architecture, the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), and the rules-based order anchored on international law.

The EAS Foreign Ministers adopted the EAS Plan of Action 2024-2028, and conveyed their continued support for the EAS. All non-ASEAN EAS countries except China and Russia reaffirmed their support for the AOIP.

Secretary Manalo co-chaired with the EU the ASEAN-EU PMC, in the Philippines' capacity as the current country coordinator for ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations. He delivered the ASEAN-EU Common Statement highlighting more than 45 years of enduring friendship between ASEAN and the EU where the Philippines welcomed EU's Team Europe plan of putting together an investment package for ASEAN worth EUR 10 billion until 2027.

The Philippines also expressed optimism on the implementation of the ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2023-2027), as well as expressed appreciation for EU's support in areas of combating climate change, disaster management, biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, gender equality and women's empowerment, youth engagement and student exchanges, and migration and education.

During the PMC with India, Secretary Manalo expressed appreciation for the solidarity extended by India to ASEAN, particularly on the Philippines' call to factually update paragraphs on the South



China Sea in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Ministerial Outcome Document. The Philippines will be the next country coordinator for ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations (2024-2027).

At the sidelines of the ASEAN meetings, Secretary Manalo held bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Brunei Darussalam, Timor-Leste, EU, New Zealand, Norway, UK, ROK, Sri Lanka and with the ASEAN Secretary General. The Secretary also had a trilateral meeting with his counterparts from the US and Japan.

**13th ASEAN Maritime Forum and 11th Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum, 02-03 August 2023, Bali, Indonesia**



*Assistant Secretary Ponce led the Philippine delegation to the 13th AMF and 11th EAMF (Photo courtesy of the ASEAN Secretariat)*

The Philippines highlighted the importance of incorporating a strategic component into the ASEAN Maritime Outlook (AMO) at the 13th AMF and presented adopted projects for institutional strengthening at the 11th EAMF held in Bali, Indonesia on 02-03 August 2023. Assistant Secretary for Maritime and Ocean Affairs Maria Angela A. Ponce led the Philippine delegation with the support of the DFA's Office of ASEAN Affairs.

The 13th AMF noted the publication of the first edition of the AMO by the ASEAN Secretariat. The AMO aims to serve as a single reference for ongoing maritime cooperation efforts across ASEAN bodies and mechanisms.

The Philippines also proposed expanded cooperation on capacity building, particularly on the recently concluded international agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) and decarbonization in shipping

in this year's EAMF. The Philippines likewise underscored the issue of sea level rise and the need to uphold and implement the UNCLOS, particularly its dispute settlement mechanism.

At the 11th EAMF, the Philippines also reported on two projects it is shepherding with Australia: the development of an EAMF website and the creation of a pool of experts from whom the EAMF can tap for policy briefs. The Philippines and Australia are currently in coordination with the ASEAN Secretariat on the implementation of both projects.

Both the AMF and the EAMF are important platforms for promoting maritime cooperation and dialogue in the region as they serve as a forum for ASEAN member states and dialogue partners to discuss common maritime issues and challenges.

**ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 27th ASEAN Political Security Community Council Meeting and 34th ASEAN Coordinating Council Meeting, 04 September 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia**



*Secretary Manalo joins other ASEAN Foreign Ministers during the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Photo courtesy of the ASEAN Secretariat)*

During the AMM, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo expressed the Philippines' acceptance of the offer from Myanmar for the Philippines to take on the ASEAN Chairship in 2026 instead of 2027, to ensure continuity in ASEAN's Community-building efforts. ASEAN Member States expressed support for this arrangement.

On the political crisis in Myanmar, Secretary Manalo said that while ASEAN should be open to explore avenues for engagement with all parties in the political crises, such efforts should not work at cross purposes with each other, nor with the ASEAN Chair's efforts, and should be fully consistent with the 5PC.

Secretary Manalo also said that the Philippines supports efforts to maximize the TAC. Amidst ongoing disputes and rivalries among some of ASEAN's external partners, all of whom are High





Contracting Parties to the TAC, it would also be useful for ASEAN to reaffirm their commitments under the Treaty. It was noted that 2026, during which the Philippines will be ASEAN Chair, will be the 50th anniversary of the TAC.

During the 27th APSC Council Meeting, Secretary Manalo highlighted some of the Philippines' contributions to the implementation of the APSC Blueprint in the past year. These include the Philippines' hosting of the 40th Meeting of the ASEAN-China Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (JWG-DOC) in Manila on 22-24 August 2023, as well as the Philippines' role as Voluntary Lead Shepherd on trafficking in persons in the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), which adopted a new ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Work Plan Against Trafficking in Persons 2023-2028.

During the 34th ACC Meeting, the Foreign Ministers endorsed, in-principle, the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 (ACV 2045), which will be noted by the Leaders at the 43rd ASEAN Summit.

Moreover, the Foreign Ministers noted the Rules of Procedure (RoP) to Support Decision-Making Process at the ASEAN Summit, as developed by the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting Working Group on Decision-Making Process (SOM WG on DMP). The RoP will serve as a non-legally binding document that is intended to facilitate ASEAN's ability to arrive at decisions when consensus is not possible during emergency situations or in cases where there is a breach of the ASEAN Charter. The SOM WG on DMP convened five (5) meetings in 2023 to develop and produce the RoP.

The ACC agreed to dissolve the ACC working group on public health emergencies and transferred its residual functions to the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting on Health Development (SOMHD) and the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN.

On the Joint Consultative Meeting (JCM), the ACC agreed to make it dormant and tasked ASEC to review the mandate of the JCM. The ACC noted that the JCM may be reconstituted with a new mandate that is effective and efficient.

**14th ASEAN Connectivity Symposium on Promoting Connectivity toward ASEAN as an**

### ***Epicentrum of Growth, 07 November 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia***

The discussions built on the outcomes of the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum as well as explored ways to achieve the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 and look for prospects beyond 2025. It was attended by the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee, MPAC 2025 Lead Bodies, MPAC 2025 National Coordinators (NC), Focal Points, ASEAN and external partners, among others.

Some of the highlights of the discussions were:

- ASEAN's digital economy is poised to grow to USD 1.1 trillion by 2023 and is expected to double to approximately USD 2 trillion when the Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) is concluded.
- Regional connectivity will continue to play an important role in the region's plan to develop a competitive Electric Vehicle (EV) ecosystem.
- To date, there are 98 connectivity projects worth 38 billion. ASEAN is urged to continue working collectively to sustain its accomplishments and set its sights in the coming decades.

### ***Philippine Hosting of ASEAN Events/Conferences***

- ASEAN Dialogue on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 22-23 June 2023. Organized by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Philippines, in cooperation with the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF EAPRO) and Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia), the Dialogue focused on the UNCRC General Comment No. 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment. Since 2018, the Dialogue has been part of AICHR Philippines' continuing advocacy to promote and protect the rights of every child in ASEAN. The series of dialogues discuss AMS' experiences and challenges to localize the General Comments, Recommendations, and Concluding Observations issued by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee).
- 56th ASEAN Day, 08 August 2023. The Office of ASEAN Affairs, led the commemoration of the 56th Founding Anniversary of ASEAN

under the theme, “ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth”, aligning with Indonesia's 2023 chairship theme and priorities. During his keynote address, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo underscored the pivotal role of the youth in ensuring a prosperous future for ASEAN. He emphasized the critical need for their voices to be heard and their contributions in policy and decision-making processes to be duly considered.



Secretary Manalo joined by ASEAN Ambassadors for the traditional ASEAN Handshake at the 56th ASEAN Founding Anniversary (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

Assistant Secretary for ASEAN Affairs and ASEAN-PH Director-General Daniel R. Espiritu highlighted the significant developments that the region has undergone over the 56 years since the formation of ASEAN. He noted that, from being emblematic of poverty and underdevelopment, ASEAN has played a crucial role in helping its Member States achieve prosperity and lasting peace.

Secretary Manalo, in conjunction with the Ambassadors of the ASEAN Member States' diplomatic missions in the Philippines, led a ceremonial cake-cutting to mark this milestone event. The attendees were treated to a performance by the world-renowned Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company, showcasing a diverse array of Filipino folk dances and songs.



Ambassadors from the ASEAN Member States' diplomatic missions in the Philippines join DFA officials for the 56th ASEAN Day cake-cutting ceremony (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

- [40th Meeting of the ASEAN-China Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea \(JWG-DOC\), 22-24 August 2023.](#) Assistant Secretary for Maritime and Ocean Affairs Maria Angela A. Ponce led the Philippine delegation to the 40th JWG-DOC, during which initial discussion on the milestone issues of the COC began. This was the third of four JWG-DOC meetings in 2023, and the first after the second reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text (SDNT) was completed in May 2023.
- [Visit to the Philippines of ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Houn, 09-12 September 2023.](#) ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Houn commenced his activities in the country by participating in a tree planting activity held on 09 September in celebration of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity's (ACB) 18th anniversary in Los Baños, Laguna.

On 11 September 2023, Secretary-General Houn expressed his gratitude for the Philippines for accepting the ASEAN Chairship in 2026 during his courtesy call on the Acting Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro. The Secretary-General emphasized that by accepting the Chairship role (i.e., a year before its actual Chairship in 2027 by regular rotation), the Philippines has contributed to the stability of the regional organization.

Acting Secretary Lazaro highlighted the Philippines' support for various initiatives of the ASEAN Secretariat, including the proposal to enhance its role in cross-pillar and cross-sectoral coordination in ASEAN. She also conveyed her appreciation to the Secretary-General for his first official visit to the Philippines to celebrate the 18th Founding Anniversary of the ACB, which is the only ASEAN Centre of Excellence hosted by the Philippines.

The Secretary-General also paid a courtesy call on DSWD Secretary and Development and ASCC Council Minister for the Philippines Rex T. Gatchalian to discuss ASCC priorities post-2025 and key points from the recently concluded 30th ASCC Council Meeting on 29

August 2023. He also attended a meeting with DTI Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual to tackle important topics raised in the AEC Council.



*Philippine Permanent Representative to ASEAN Hjayceelyn M. Quintana and the Ambassadors of ASEAN Member States in Manila join Acting Secretary Lazaro and ASEAN Secretary-General Hourn for a luncheon (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

- ASEAN Roadshow 2023.** The Office of ASEAN Affairs, in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts and Letters of the University of Santo Tomas (UST), inaugurated the ASEAN Roadshow 2023 on 04 October 2023 at the UST Thomas Aquinas Research Complex. Developed in partnership with the Political Science Department and The Political Science Forum of the UST, the initiative aimed to promote ASEAN awareness among the Filipino youth, focusing on the organization's rich history and milestones. Aligned with Indonesia's Chairship theme, "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth", the ASEAN Roadshow 2023 endeavored to highlight the significance of the Filipino youth as ASEAN citizens and to illustrate the opportunities available to them in the ASEAN community. The project, spanning the entire year, engaged schools and universities in collaboration with local government units throughout the Philippines. It included a comprehensive talk on various ASEAN-related topics, fostering a sense of ASEAN identity among senior high school and college students. On 09 November 2023, *ASEAN Roadshow 2023: Byaheng Palawan*, the second leg of the 2023 ASEAN Roadshow was held. In his welcome address, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo emphasized the importance of understanding the shared history and values of ASEAN Member States. The ASEAN Roadshow 2023 featured a dynamic and interactive ASEAN Village, showcasing booths representing each of the ASEAN Member States and an ASEAN national costume contest. Several ASEAN missions in

the Philippines contributed to the affair. The vibrant display allowed students to explore the diverse cultures, traditions, and innovations in ASEAN.



*The Resource Speakers, members of the organizing Committee of DFA and UST (top); and students of Palawan State University showcased the national costumes of ASEAN countries made of recyclable materials during the ASEAN National Costume Contest (bottom)*

### **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership**

Deposit of the Instrument of Ratification of the Regional Comprehensive Partnership (RCEP) Agreement to the ASEAN Secretary-General, 27 April 2023. Philippine Permanent Representative to ASEAN, Ambassador Hjayceelyn M. Quintana, completed the final step in the Philippines' ratification process of the RCEP Agreement by depositing the Instrument of Ratification (IoR) to ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn at the headquarters of the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia on 27 April 2023.



*Ambassador Quintana deposits the Philippines' Instrument of Ratification of the RCEP Agreement to ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn (Photo courtesy of the ASEAN Secretariat)*





In handing over the IoR, Ambassador Quintana highlighted the Agreement's timely entry into force for the Philippines given the ongoing economic reforms in the country, and noted that the Philippine participation in RCEP is important especially as it will make local industries more competitive, and it also complements existing government support programs with the measures committed in the FTA to open up trade.

### ***Meetings of the High-Level Task Force on the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision***

The Philippine delegation, headed by Philippine Eminent Person to the HLTF-ACV Ambassador Elizabeth P. Buensuceso and High-Level Representative to the HLTF-ACV Ambassador Luis T. Cruz, participated in several meetings of the HLTF-ACV, which is mandated to develop the ASEAN Community's Vision beyond 2025.

- 6th Meeting of the HLTF-ACV, 20-21 February 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia. The Philippines called for an ambitious but realistic ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision taking into account megatrends of the next twenty years. This vision should hopefully lead to a more agile, responsive and efficient ASEAN that its citizens could identify with. ASEAN Member States agreed that the Vision Statement will include the challenges facing ASEAN, megatrends that will remain relevant in the next 20 years, what ASEAN has done to address these challenges, and what ASEAN still needs to do fill up the gaps and challenges to map out and contextualize the vision for ASEAN in the future.
- 7th Meeting of the HLTF-ACV, 19-20 March 2023, Belitung, Indonesia. The Philippines and other ASEAN Member States called for consultation with relevant stakeholders in order to craft an ASEAN Vision and its Strategic Plans that are inclusive, pragmatic, balanced, and comprehensive. The stakeholders' representatives emphasized the need to mainstream their respective areas of concern, including human rights, biodiversity, ease of doing business and the development of an agile system that will withstand rapid and unexpected shocks and megatrends that will confront ASEAN in the future. The Philippines also called for bold institutional reforms including addressing issues and updates in the ASEAN
- 8th Meeting of the HLTF-ACV, 26-27 June 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia. The HLTF-ACV commenced negotiations on the development of the ACV 2045 with the aim of developing a concise and streamlined ACV 2045 that can articulate ASEAN's aspirations for the future based on the Core Elements of the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision. The Philippines emphasized the importance of highlighting institutional strengthening of ASEAN in its vision, with the ability to advance ASEAN Community-building and exercise its leadership in the region and coordinate cross-pillar and cross-sectoral issues, and respond to regional and global developments, with the support of a strengthened Secretariat. The Philippines also urged the HLTF-ACV to begin identifying and including in the discussions relevant ASEAN stakeholders in the development of the Strategic Plans or attendant documents of the ACV 2045.
- 9th Meeting of the HLTF-ACV, 26-27 July 2023, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Philippines advocated for the inclusion of national priorities in ASEAN. It likewise suggested that ASEAN continue to respond to issues that affect the country and the region such as migration, climate change and biodiversity loss. The Philippines also called for ASEAN to drive regional economic growth and prosperity by maximizing the opportunities of the creative economy. Moreover, the Philippine delegation advocated that ASEAN should empower women to participate fully and effectively in ASEAN Community-building and decision-making processes.
- 10th Meeting of the HLTF-ACV, 26-27 August 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia. The HLTF-ACV successfully finalized the draft ACV 2045, with the incorporated inputs from the HLTF on ASEAN Economic Integration (HLTF-EI), the

the Senior Officials' Committee for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (SOCA), and the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC).



*HLTF-ACV Representatives at the 10th Meeting of the HLTF-ACV (Photo courtesy of the ASEAN Secretariat)*

The ACV 2045 has four (4) sections: I. Introduction; II. Challenges and Opportunities; III. Our Future ASEAN; and IV. Our Commitment (formerly Our Way Forward). Section III is further divided into Political-Security, Economic, Socio-cultural, Connectivity, and Institutional Strengthening subheadings. The meeting adopted the Philippines' proposal to emphasize the five (5) core elements in the statement. The Our Commitment section now tasks the ASEAN bodies to implement the five (5) core elements in achieving a resilient ASEAN Community, also a Philippine proposal.

- 11th Meeting of the HLTF-ACV, 10-11 October 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia. Following the ASEAN Leaders' endorsement of the draft ACV 2045 at the 43rd ASEAN Summit on 05 September 2023, the HLTF-ACV agreed to fast-track the development of the Strategic Plans of the ASEAN Community Pillars as well as a Strategic Plan on Connectivity. The HLTF-ACV adopted the Philippines' proposal to name the attendant documents of the ACV 2045 "Strategic Plans", and adopted the format proposed by the Philippines to reflect the strategic and visionary character of the document. Formerly called ASEAN Community Blueprints, the Strategic Plans 2025-2045 will serve as a guide for ASEAN in implementing the ACV 2045. Furthermore, taking into consideration the lessons learned in the creation and the on-going implementation of

the ASEAN Community Blueprints, the Philippines highlighted the significance of monitoring and evaluation, and cross-pillar coordination in the development and implementation of the Strategic Plans. The Strategic Plans will identify specific goals, objectives, action plans, and performance measures, among others. The ACV 2045 and its Strategic Plans take into account megatrends and challenges, such as climate change, digital transformation, and major power rivalries, among others, that will confront ASEAN in the coming years.

- 12th Meeting of the HLTF-ACV, 04-05 December 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia. Philippine Permanent Representative to ASEAN, Ambassador Hjayceelyn M. Quintana, completed the final step in the Philippines' ratification process of the RCEP Agreement by depositing the Instrument of Ratification (IoR) to ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn at the headquarters of the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia on 27 April 2023.



*Ambassador Buensuceso and Ambassador Cruz discuss the ACV 2045 Strategic Plans (Photo courtesy of the ASEAN Secretariat)*

The Philippines, together with other ASEAN Member States, commenced drafting the Strategic Plans of the ACV 2045. Each of the community pillars— APSC, AEC, ASCC, and ASEAN Connectivity—will develop attendant documents which will be attached to the ACV 2045. In relation to this, the HLTF-ACV conducted an interface and coordination meeting with the Chairs of the HLTF-EI, the SOCA, and ACCC to address their concerns and discuss their progress in drafting the Strategic Plans of the AEC Pillar, ASCC Pillar, and Connectivity, respectively. Ambassador

Buensuceso also pushed for stronger cross-pillar coordination as the drafting of ASEAN's strategic plans began, as well as the identification of initiatives that should be adopted by other Pillars, in consultation with the other sectoral bodies. The Philippines proposed that in order for the ACV 2045 to really reflect the will of the people of ASEAN, the HLTF-ACV should consult with non-governmental organizations, including the ASEAN Working Group on Human Rights, ASEAN Women for Peace and Reconciliation, and the youth sector.

tangible outcomes and to ensure that the development gap is effectively narrowed for APEC to truly achieve its vision for a prosperous region. He suggested that equipping vulnerable and marginalized sectors with the tools they need to fully benefit from economic growth, and by improving their education, skills and health, would help close the equity gap in the economy.

The theme of APEC 2023 was “*Interconnected, Innovative, Inclusive*”.

### The Philippines in APEC

#### ***APEC First Senior Officials’ Meeting and Related Meetings, 14-28 February 2023, Palm Springs, California, USA***



*Undersecretary Sorreta delivered Philippine positions at APEC SOM1 (Photo courtesy of the APEC National Secretariat)*

The Philippine delegation led by the Philippines’ APEC Senior Official, Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Carlos D. Sorreta, participated in the First APEC Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM1) held on 26-28 February 2023 in Palm Springs, California, USA. Related meetings, capacity building seminars and workshops, joint cross-fora and cross-committee dialogues began on 14 February 2023 leading up to SOM1. All APEC Member Economies, the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), and APEC observers participated. The US hosting of APEC coincided with the 30th anniversary of the elevation of APEC to a summit-level forum during the 1993 US chairmanship.

In his remarks and interventions, Undersecretary Sorreta emphasized the need for APEC to tackle inclusive growth that would lead to concrete and

#### ***APEC Second Senior Officials’ Meeting and Related Meetings, 14-26 May 2023, Detroit, Michigan, USA***



*Undersecretary Sorreta, along with DTI Assistant Secretary Allan B. Gepty, delivers interventions at the APEC SOM2 (top); and engages with Senior Officials of the APEC ASEAN Caucus (bottom) (Photos courtesy of the APEC National Secretariat)*

Philippine APEC Senior Official, Undersecretary Carlos D. Sorreta, headed the Philippine delegation to the Second APEC Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM2). In his remarks, Undersecretary Sorreta underscored the role of innovation and cooperation and inclusive policies in advancing the growth and development of the region’s MSMEs and other sectors with untapped economic potential, including those in the transportation and energy sectors. He highlighted the importance of including MSMEs and empowering them to participate in the transition of



the transportation sector. In the Philippines, MSMEs make up a large portion of the country's public transportation and if the impact of the transportation sector on the environment is effectively addressed, their inclusive and sustainable growth is critical. Thus, one of the strategies toward lowering carbon emissions is the modernization of these vehicles.

During the Plenary Sessions, APEC Senior Officials noted and endorsed the reports of its various committees and working groups, and agreed on the adoption of the work plans and workstreams of APEC for the year, including proposed collaborations and high-level and Ministerial Meetings to be held throughout the year. APEC Member Economies broadly supported several initiatives of the US as chair such as the Digital Pacific Agenda and the Just Energy Transition. The Philippines sustains its push for economic priorities in food and energy security, digitalization and the digital participation of its MSMEs and other economic sectors with unlocked potential, climate mitigation and adaptation action.

**11th APEC Transportation Ministerial Meeting, 15-17 May 2023, Detroit, Michigan, USA**

The APEC Transportation Ministerial Meeting (TPTMM) gathered transportation ministers and high-level representatives from APEC Member Economies to discuss the essential role of transport in fostering economic growth during sessions on supply chains and connectivity, addressing transportation's role in climate change, inclusivity and gender. The APEC National Secretariat, through Principal Assistant Michael Joseph G. Ostique supported the Department of Transportation (DOTr) delegation, which was headed by Undersecretary for Maritime Elmer Francisco U. Sarmiento.

During the TMM, the Philippines explained that a well-functioning transportation system will efficiently move people, along with goods and services. The Philippines cited the shipping and logistics sector as the backbone of global trade and investment, as well as the importance of promoting stable modes of transportation, digitalization, and streamlining of systems and processes. The Philippines joined APEC Member Economies in exchanging insights in addressing climate change by fast-tracking the adoption of low and zero-emission transportation technologies. This includes the transition to electric vehicles, sustainable aviation fuels, and green

maritime technologies and fuels.

**APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting, 24-26 May 2023, Detroit, Michigan, USA**



*DTI Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual and Undersecretary Sorreta, with members of the DFA and DTI delegation (Photo courtesy of the APEC National Secretariat)*

Philippine APEC Senior Official, Undersecretary Carlos D. Sorreta, and the APEC National Secretariat joined the Philippine delegation to the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade (MRT) Meeting, which was headed by DTI Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual.

At the APEC MRT, Secretary Pascual exchanged views with APEC Trade Ministers on the significant role of trade and investment in promoting inclusive and sustainable growth. Ministers also shared ideas and practical proposals on how to improve the relevance and responsiveness of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to challenges including next generation trade and investment issues.

**Third APEC Business Advisory Council Meeting, 27-30 July 2023, Cebu**



*President Marcos, with DTI Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual and other delegates during the ABAC3 Opening Ceremony. (Photo courtesy of ABAC Philippines)*



President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. opened the Third APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC3) Meeting on 27 July 2023 in Cebu, highlighting the dynamic partnership between APEC economies and the business sector and how this contributes to the attainment of the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 for an open, dynamic, resilient, and peaceful Asia-Pacific region for the prosperity of our people and future generations. He emphasized that the principles of equity, sustainability, and opportunity must drive the workstreams of ABAC.

The Philippines' ABAC3 hosting was led by ABAC Philippines Members Sabin Aboitiz, Tomas Alcantara and Joanne de Asis under the theme, "Equity, Sustainability, Opportunity".

**APEC Third Senior Officials' Meeting and Related Meetings, 29 July – 21 August 2023, Seattle, Washington, USA**



Undersecretary Jose, together with DFA and DTI officials, participates in APEC SOM3  
(Photo courtesy of the APEC National Secretariat)

Leading the Philippine delegation, Philippine APEC Senior Official, Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Charles C. Jose, engaged with APEC Member Economies during the Third APEC Senior Officials Meeting (SOM3). The discussions among senior officials revolved around host US' priorities such as the Manoa Agenda, Digital Pacific Agenda and the Bay Area Agenda, among others. The Philippines emphasized its priority to address climate issues through cooperation as a common goal in energy and clean economy, which are keys toward greening the APEC region. Philippine officials also participated in the following related meetings:

- APEC Senior Disaster Management Officials' Forum (SDMOF), 02 August 2023, Seattle, Washington, USA. Principal Assistant Michael

G. Ostique of the Philippine APEC National Secretariat represented and delivered key messages at the APEC SDMOF to push for the Philippines' interest to effectively implement adaptive crisis management, together with investments in preparedness, resilience, and continuous learning including cutting-edge technologies, data analytics, and risk assessment tools to predict and prevent potential crises before they escalate. The Philippines' also pushed for investment in human capital by empowering the workforce with relevant skills and knowledge in order to create a force capable of adapting to challenges and risks.

- APEC Food Security Ministerial Meeting (FSMM), and High-Level Policy Dialogue on Agricultural Biotechnology (HLPDAB), 03 August 2023, Seattle, Washington, USA. At the FSMM, HLPDAB, and the Agricultural Technical Cooperation Working Group (ACTWG), Department of Agriculture (DA) Senior Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban headed the Philippine delegation together with Assistant Secretary Rex Estoperez and Agriculture Attaché Lupiño Lazaro and the Philippine APEC National Secretariat. The Philippines acknowledged the steadfast commitment and work of the APEC Policy Partnership on Food Security (PPFS) behind the finalization of the "Principles for Achieving Food Security through Sustainable Agri-Food Systems in the APEC Region" and, along with all other economies, supported its endorsement. On the draft Ministerial Statement, the Philippines emphasized the need to support research and development (R&D) on technologies and practices that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, sequester carbon, and minimize adverse environmental impact, and the need to continuously explore and encourage the adoption of renewable energy to power irrigation, and reduce the carbon footprint from agriculture.
- APEC High-level Meeting on Health and the Economy (HLMHE), 06 August 2023, Seattle, Washington, USA. Department of Health (DOH) Undersecretary Dr. Lilibeth C. David led the Philippine delegation who was joined by the Philippine APEC National Secretariat to push for the Philippines' priority to address



challenges of interoperability through effective governance structures, collaborative efforts, and legal frameworks, aiming to enhance its digital healthcare ecosystem and to provide better access to quality health services and improved patient outcomes for its citizens. The Philippines also recognized that a fully-functional and efficient primary health care system is a key driver towards the achievement of universal health care (UHC) and an indispensable tool for strengthening localities for prevention, preparedness and response (PPR).

- [APEC Energy Ministers' Meeting \(EMM\), 15-16 August 2023, Seattle, Washington, USA.](#) Department of Energy (DOE) Undersecretary Felix William B. Fuentebella headed the Philippine delegation who was joined by Principal Assistant Michael Joseph G. Ostique of the Philippine APEC National Secretariat at the EMM to push for the Philippines' interests that are likewise aligned with the APEC region's goals on energy. The Philippines has also manifested the spirit of cooperation through compromises on red lines raised by other economies without sacrificing our energy agenda. The Philippines highlighted that energy priorities, energy resiliency challenges, and sustainable development remain intertwined, recognizing the importance of diverse and accelerated efforts and stronger commitments in the region.
- [APEC Women and the Economy Forum \(WEF\): High-Level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy \(HLPDWE\), 20 August 2023, Seattle, Washington, USA.](#) DTI Undersecretary Blesila A. Lantayona led the Philippine delegation, who was joined by Principal Assistant Michael Joseph G. Ostique of the Philippine APEC National Secretariat at the WEF and HLPDWE to highlight the Philippines' initiatives that have helped institutionalize gender budgeting in the government such as the Gender and Development (GAD) budget policy and the Magna Carta of Women (MCW), Gender Focal Point Systems (GFPS) and various gender analysis tools and guiding documents, among others. The Philippines also shared its work highlighting unpaid care and domestic work, which hinders women's participation in paid market work and increases their likelihood to be employed in the informal sector.
- [SME Ministerial Meeting \(SMEMM\), 21 August 2023, Seattle, Washington, USA.](#) DTI Undersecretary Blesila A. Lantayona led the Philippine delegation, who was joined by Principal Assistant Michael Joseph G. Ostique of the Philippine APEC National Secretariat at the SMEMM where the Philippines shared initiatives that empower Filipino MSMEs in the global marketplace through digital tools and technologies and emphasized the significant growth of the Philippines' digital economy during the pandemic. The Philippines also underscored the interconnectedness between women's economic empowerment and the growth of MSMEs, discussed actionable steps to expand women-owned businesses' access to global value chains, and explored avenues to promote women's entrepreneurship through e-commerce.

**Concluding APEC Senior Officials' Meeting, 11-12 November 2023, and 34th APEC Ministerial Meeting, 14-15 November 2023, San Francisco, California, USA**



*Secretary Manalo and DTI Undersecretary Ceferino S. Rodolfo at the 34th AMM (top), and Undersecretary Jose and DTI Bureau of International Trade Relations Director Marie Sherylyn D. Aquia during the Concluding APEC SOM (bottom)  
(Photos courtesy of the APEC Secretariat)*

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo led the Philippine delegation to the 34th APEC Ministerial Meeting (AMM). During his intervention,



he expressed confidence in APEC's ability to foster inclusive and sustainable growth at a much rapid pace moving forward, in a way that makes a difference to the lives of people and to ensure the same for future generations despite the adversities faced and urged APEC governments to work even more cooperatively with each other and their partners to hasten the path towards the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040.

During the said meeting, the Philippines was proclaimed winner of the 2023 APEC Digital Prosperity Award for the EMERGE app developed by a Filipino duo, which is an export readiness assessment tool to assist MSMEs in entering the global market. According to Ambassador Matt Murray, US APEC Senior Official, the award recognizes innovative applications that have the potential to further prosperity and inclusive growth. The Philippines also won one of the prizes in the 2023 APEC Photo Contest which aims to capture the efforts of APEC economies in balancing economic and social goals.

Philippine APEC Senior Official, Undersecretary Charles C. Jose, participated in the Concluding Senior Officials' Meeting on 11-12 November 2023.

#### ***APEC Finance Ministers' Meeting, 12-13 November 2023, San Francisco, California, USA***

The Philippine delegation, headed by Department of Finance (DOF) Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno, accompanied by Undersecretary Maria Edita Z. Tan, Undersecretary Zeno Ronald R. Abenoja, other DOF personnel and the Philippine APEC National Secretariat, participated in the APEC Finance Ministers' Meeting (FMM) on 12-13 November 2023. Secretary Diokno highlighted the Philippines' proactive steps in navigating global challenges. The finance ministers discussed the state of the global economy and shared country-specific policies geared towards achieving economic recovery and growth. Likewise, the need to strengthen supply chains, labor markets, and service sectors, as well as slow down inflation were also emphasized during the meeting.

APEC Informal Senior Officials' Meeting, 04-06 December, 2023 in Lima, Peru

Officers from the Philippine APEC National Secretariat participated at the APEC Informal Senior Officials' Meeting (ISOM) on 04-06

December 2023. The program and agenda consisted of symposia on Peru's identified priorities, SOM Retreat on a way forward to make APEC work and bodies more effective, and the SOM Plenary.

As the 2024 Host Economy, Peru proposed the following theme and priorities: (1) trade and investment for inclusive growth; (2) innovation to promote the transition to the formal and global economy; and (3) sustainable growth for resilient development.

#### ***Technical Board of APEC Matters Meetings***

As Chair of the Technical Board on APEC Matters (TBAM), the Philippine APEC National Secretariat organized four (4) TBAM Meetings in 2023 to discuss priority areas, activities and proposed actions of the APEC and its member economies.

### **The Philippines in the United Nations**

#### ***2024-2028 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the Philippines***



*President Marcos witnessed the signing of the 2024-2028 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the Philippines by Secretary Manalo and NEDA Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan and for the UN is Resident Coordinator in the Philippines, Mr. Gustavo González*

The 2024-2028 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the Philippines (SDCF) was signed by Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan and UN Resident Coordinator in the Philippines Gustavo González in a ceremony on 24 October 2023 in the presence of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

The new document shows how Philippine partnership with the UN has evolved. Infused with a more mature and outward-looking synergy of efforts, the Framework builds on the dynamism of the Philippine economy and refocuses UN support to advance the national agenda for innovation-driven, climate-smart, resilient and inclusive economic growth.

The 2024-2028 UN SDCF ensures that UN programs and activities in the country enjoy the consent of the Philippine government, are driven by the needs and context of national development, and are also subject to joint monitoring. The President pointed out that this arrangement provides a good model of co-ownership, transparency and accountability for UN country programmes.

Under the Framework, the Philippine government and the UN have agreed to work on three overarching strategic outcomes: (1) human capital development, inclusion, and resilience building; (2) sustainable economy economic development, decent work, and innovation; and (3) climate action, environmental sustainability, and disaster-resilience.

### **UN General Assembly Resolution on the Permanent Court of Arbitration**

The UN General Assembly adopted the resolution presented by the Philippines and a core group of countries which recognizes the important role of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The resolution invites Member States and organizations of the UN system to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the PCA. It also encourages member states to avail of the services of the PCA, which complement the mission of the UN to promote international peace and the development of international law.

### **Financial Contributions**

The DFA, as Chair of the International Commitments Fund (ICF), led the discussion for the ICF Review Panel's endorsement of the FY 2024 ICF budget amounting to PHP 3,082,574,280.00. The FY 2024 ICF budget covers 183 contributions (169 mandatory or assessed contributions to 157 international organizations, and 14 regular voluntary contributions) amounting to PHP 2,941,306,655.00,

and 14 international conference hostings amounting to PHP 141,267,625.00.

Maximizing the remaining ICF budget for 2023, the Department also recommended providing strategic voluntary contributions to 25 international organizations amounting to PHP 35,891,974.55 chargeable against the lump sum allocation in the FY 2023 budget.



*ICF Review Panel, composed of the DFA as Chair, DBM as Co-Chair, OP-Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary for General Administration and Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Finance and Administration, DOF and NEDA, deliberates on the FY 2024 budget (Photo courtesy of DFA-UNIO)*

### **Candidatures**

The Philippines was reelected in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Council under Category C for term 2024-2025 at elections held on 01 December 2023 during the 33rd IMO Assembly at the IMO Headquarters in London, UK. The Philippines received 136 votes out of the possible 168 votes, ranking with the fourth highest number of votes amongst countries vying for the said seat. This is a huge leap from the 116 votes the country received in 2021, showing the trust and confidence of IMO member states for the maritime credentials of the Philippines. It is also the highest ranking the Philippines has garnered at IMO elections in recent years. Philippine Ambassador to the UK and Permanent Representative to the IMO Teodoro L. Locsin Jr., in his candidature pitch, vowed that the Philippines will keep seafarers at the center of the IMO's agenda.



*Ambassador Locsin and DOTr Secretary Jaime J. Bautista at the IMO Plenary Hall right after the Philippines' election to the IMO Council (Photo courtesy of DFA-UNIO)*



The Philippines has also successfully secured seats in the following bodies in 2023:

- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Council 2024-2027;
- International Development Law Organization (IDLO) Standing Committee 2023-2025;
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Industrial Development Board (IDB) 2024-2027 and Programme and Budget Committee (PBC) 2024-2025;
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Legal Committee 2025-2029;
- UN Committee on Conferences for 2024-2026;
- Appointment of the Philippine National Group members to the PCA 2023-2028 (Dr. Raul Pangalangan, Prof. Sedfrey Candelaria, Dr. Antonio Gabriel M. La Viña and Hague PE Ambassador J. Eduardo Malaya).

***Philippine Chairmanship and Hosting of Key Meetings, Conferences and Fora***

- Ministerial Roundtable on Migration, Environment and Climate Change in the Asia Pacific Region, 21 September 2023, New York, USA. The Philippines, headed by Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga, in partnership with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), convened a Ministerial Roundtable on Migration, Environment and Climate Change in the Asia Pacific region at the sidelines of the High Level Week of the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly on 21 September 2023 in New York, USA.



*Secretary Manalo and DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga with DFA and IOM officials during the Ministerial Roundtable (Photo courtesy of DTI-UNIO)*

As a champion of the rights of migrants and a leading voice for climate action and justice, the Philippines took the lead in organizing the event to elevate discussions and identify the linkages

The Roundtable also featured keynote presentations by the Chair of the Committee on Migrant Workers Edgar Corzo Sosa and Columbia Climate School Lamont Research Chair Dr. Radley M. Horton. Their expertise enriched the conversation and helped in developing a shared understanding of these issues amongst participating governments.

- International Seabed Authority Workshop on Deep-Sea Related Matters, 09-11 October 2023, Manila. The Philippines, in collaboration with the International Seabed Authority (ISA), hosted the 2023 ISA-Philippines national capacity development workshop on deep-sea related matters from 09-11 October 2023 in Manila, which brought together a diverse group of government officials, experts, academics, civil society and industry representatives to explore and discuss critical topics related to deep-sea exploration and mining.



*Assistant Secretary for Maritime and Ocean Affairs Maria Angela A. Ponce, Acting Secretary for Foreign Affairs Charles C. Jose, International Seabed Authority Secretary-General Michael W. Lodge, and Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN Antonio M. Lagdameo at the ISA Workshop on Deep-Sea Related Matters (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

The workshop, jointly organized by the ISA and the DFA-Maritime and Ocean Affairs Office (MOAO), serves as a platform for knowledge sharing, dialogue, and cooperation. It builds upon previous workshops and consultations related to the UNCLOS and the work of the ISA, emphasizing updates and progress in the implementation of these crucial frameworks.

The workshop underscored the commitment of both the Philippines and the ISA to foster cooperation among stakeholders from government, academia, and the private sector.



The goal is to increase awareness and understanding of UNCLOS, promote sustainable practices in deep-sea exploration and mining, and identify key issues and challenges that must be addressed to develop a responsible deep-sea related policy and regulatory framework.

- Manila Meeting on Indo-Pacific Perspectives on Autonomous Weapons System, 13-14 December 2023, Manila. The Philippines, through the DFA, hosted the first-ever Indo-Pacific regional meet on lethal autonomous weapons system in line with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s call in September 2022 during the UN General Assembly for the international community to develop governance structures to prevent the weaponization of emerging technologies.



Secretary Manalo with the participants of the Manila Meeting on Indo-Pacific Perspectives on Autonomous Weapons System (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo stressed that the diverse and crucial voices of the Indo-Pacific region are missing in the conversations of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, thus the need for the region's active participation in the development of global norms for these. Secretary Manalo highlighted that the most apparent risk arises from the development of machines that can operate without meaningful human control, run by algorithms that are empowered to undertake decisions involving human life or death.

The Manila Meeting considered the implications of the use of autonomy in weapons systems from ethical, moral, economic, social, and humanitarian dimensions from the point of view of the Indo-Pacific Region. The meeting offered an expanded platform for voices from civil society, industry, international law, as well as

peace and security.

### **Philippine Participation in Key Meetings, Conferences and Fora**

- 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5), 05-09 March 2023, Doha, Qatar. The Philippines reaffirmed its solidarity with Least Development Countries (LDCs) stating that they represent the key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In his statement delivered on 07 March 2023 at the 5th UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5), Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Carlos D. Sorreta urged traditional donor countries and the UN Development System to redouble their efforts and fulfill their commitments for LDCs, especially on debt structuring, debt relief, and financing for development. He noted that LDCs are where the battle to achieve the SDGs must be won to attain the desired future, and only by uplifting LDCs towards irreversible graduation will true people-centered prosperity and sustainable development take hold be achieved.



Undersecretary Sorreta assures LDCs of the Philippines' continued support in helping them achieve their development goals (Photo courtesy of the UN)

Undersecretary Sorreta also affirmed the Philippines' support to the vision outcomes of the first and succeeding United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the "Doha Programme of Action (DPoA)" for LDCs, a blueprint for providing LDCs with much-needed support for development. The LDC5 Conference adopted a Political Declaration to support implementation of the DPoA.



In his remarks, Undersecretary Sorreta also highlighted the important role the Philippines and other middle-income countries (MICs) play in fully implementing the plan of action. He remarked that MICs share comparable experiences and can provide LDCs with financial resources, knowledge, expertise, and technology that can enable LDCs to build productive capacities, diversify their economies, and develop human and social capital. He conveyed the Philippines' desire to expand development cooperation initiatives with LDCs in the form of technical cooperation, scholarships, and capacity-building through a South-South and Triangular Cooperation. At present, the Philippines undertakes these initiatives with LDCs in the Asia-Pacific, but is exploring the possibility of partnering with African LDCs as well.

The Philippines is one of more than 150 delegations that participated in the conference. Apart from LDCs, the conference was attended by delegations from development partners, international organizations, representatives from the UN system, and other stakeholders such as the private sector, CSOs, and NGOs.

Undersecretary Sorreta also met with the Philippines' bilateral partners to renew the country's commitment to cooperate in maintaining peace and security and in promoting development on the sidelines of the Conference. He met with representatives of the delegations of Timor Leste, Bhutan, Ghana, Malawi, Madagascar, South Sudan, Mozambique, Lesotho, Nepal, Kazakhstan, Yemen, Qatar, USA, Portugal, Tuvalu, Tonga, and Latvia, amongst other countries.

Undersecretary Sorreta emphasized that peace is essential to actualizing potential and a prerequisite to prosperity. He reaffirmed the Philippines' commitment to people-centered peace and prosperity as the main driver of the Philippines' bid to the United Nations Security Council for the term 2027-2028.

LDC5 concluded with the adoption of the Doha Programme of Action that will be implemented over the next decade to enhance support for LDCs. The Philippines strongly supported its adoption and works to enhance its engagement and cooperation with all LDCs for mutual benefit.

- [67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW67\), 06-17 March 2023, New York, USA](#). The Philippines highlighted what it has been doing to leverage innovation, technology and digitalization to benefit women and girls in entrepreneurship, agriculture, education, law enforcement, and preventing online gender-based violence, especially in the context of the pandemic.
- [First Session of the International Dialogue on Migration \(IDM\), 30 – 31 March 2023, New York, USA](#).



*Undersecretary de Vega delivers the Philippine statement during the plenary session of the First Session of the IDM (Photo courtesy of DFA-UMWA)*

Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega led the Philippine delegation during the First Session of the IDM. In his intervention at the IDM, he highlighted that the Philippines, as a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) Champion country, is the first to codify the GCM Objectives through the enactment of the Department of Migrant Workers Act of 2021 (RA 11641). He also stated that migration and displacement due to climate change is significant for vulnerable countries like the Philippines, which is taking the primary step of capacitating and empowering community members to be prepared. The need to build disaster preparedness and resilience through capacity building of the community, in line with Objective 2 of the GCM.



The IDM had five (5) panels in which the members of the Philippine delegation participated, and closed with a call to create policies that prioritize the well-being of all through an intersectional approach to accelerate the achievement of the UN SDGs.

- Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, 11-22 July 2023, New York, USA. The Philippine delegation, composed of officials and staff from the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs and the Philippine Permanent Mission in New York, was also joined by Naga City Mayor Nelson S. Legacion.

In his delivery of the Philippine National Statement during the General Debate of the HLPF's Ministerial segment on 18 July 2023, Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega highlighted the Philippines' priorities as outlined in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028. He specifically underlined the importance of data, digitalization, and multi-stakeholder engagement. He also elaborated on the valuable contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development.

Undersecretary de Vega also delivered the ASEAN Statement during the same HLPF General Debate on 17 July 202 which reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to the SDGs and to realize the ASEAN Vision 2025.



*Undersecretary de Vega delivers the ASEAN Statement and the Philippine National Statement during the General Debate of the HLPF Ministerial Segment*

The Philippines also engaged in the maiden HLPF Session for the Middle-Income Countries (MICs) on 13 July 2023 and the HLPF session on SDG9 (Industry, Innovation and

Infrastructure) and interlinkages with other SDGs on 12 July 2023.

In its capacity as Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on 14, 17 and 19 July 2023, the Philippines lent support to preparations and presentations of the 39 VNR presenters through conduct of technical meetings and pairing exercises. During the actual VNR presentations, the Philippines was designated "VNR Friend", and actively interacted with the VNR presenters from Cambodia, Guyana, Saudi Arabia and Portugal.

The Philippines also co-sponsored and was key speaker in the following side-events:

*Improving Climate Resilience and Disaster Response Through Digital Payments: Increasing Ambition Through A Call to Action* (12 July 2023). In delivering the welcome remarks, Undersecretary de Vega shared with the participants that PDP 2023-2028 identifies strengthening the Philippines' services and facilities for digital payments as a priority. It is also one of the objectives of the country's "Strategy Framework to Strengthen Social Protection." He further underscored the crucial role of Filipino migrants' successful efforts towards digital innovation and transformation, including the strengthening of digital payments.



*Reception hosted by the Group of Friends in Support of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Healthcare Facilities* (12 July 2023). In his keynote remarks, Undersecretary de Vega reaffirmed the Philippines' commitment to WASH in healthcare facilities and informed Member States that, along with Hungary and the World Health Organization (WHO), the Philippines intends to introduce a resolution later in the current year to further elevate attention, discussion and commitment to addressing WASH in healthcare facilities.



Integration of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) in VNRs to Support Acceleration of the SDG implementation (14 July 2023). On behalf of the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of VNRs (Philippines and Morocco), Undersecretary de Vega advocated for the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation perspectives in the VNRs as a critical tool in tracking more comprehensively and inclusively the progress of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in generating valuable evidence of SSTC contributions towards achieving the SDGs. This side-event launched the Handbook on Integrating SSTC in VNRs, a joint project of the UN Office of South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and the Permanent Missions of the Philippines and Morocco.



Launching of the Handbook on Integrating SSTC in VNRs led by Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN Antonio M. Lagdameo and Undersecretary de Vega

The Philippines was further highlighted as a Champion Country of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), which recognizes migration and migrants as important drivers of sustainable development. Undersecretary de Vega emphasized that the 2030 Agenda is not yet the finish line, and that the Philippines shall remain committed as it moves forward to achieve the GCM objectives and the SDGs, with the conviction that “Sustainable is attainable.”

- Sustainable Development Goals Summit, 18-19 September 2023, New York, USA. The Philippines, led by Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, participated in the SDG Summit on 18-19 September 2023 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA.

During the Summit, Member States adopted a Political Declaration of the HLPF on Sustainable Development, marking a new phase of accelerated implementation of the 2023 Sustainable Development Agenda.



Secretary Manalo reaffirms the Philippines' commitment to achieving the SDGs

Secretary Manalo delivered his remarks during the Leaders' Dialogue with the theme, “Building resilience and leaving no one behind,” focused on tackling socioeconomic inequalities and improving the well-being of vulnerable and marginalized groups to foster inclusiveness and resilience globally.

The Secretary highlighted President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.' 8-point Socioeconomic Agenda and PDP 2023-2028 that could serve as blueprints for nations to build resilience and ensure no one is left behind. He also urged the international community to work together to future-proof disaster prone regions and the world from future shocks.

- High-level General Debate of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 78), 23 September 2023, New York, USA. The Philippines, led by Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, called for renewed trust and solidarity towards a rules-based order guided by international law that guarantees the flourishing in peace of free and equal nations during the high-level General Debate of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 78) held on 23 September 2023.

In his message delivered on behalf of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. before world leaders, Secretary Manalo emphasized the country's unwavering commitment to multilateralism, with the UN Charter as its bedrock.



Secretary Manalo calls for renewed trust and solidarity to strengthen the UN during his speech at the UN General Assembly

Secretary Manalo reiterated the Philippines' commitment to promoting the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of disputes in addressing cross-border concerns, including abidance to the UNCLOS to deal with continuing challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.

The theme for UNGA 78 was "Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all."

During the General Debate, the Philippines touted its mid- and long-term development plans and vision as the country's contribution to global efforts to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

- Side-event on Wage Theft and Human Rights of Migrants during the 54th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC54), 02 October 2023, Geneva, Switzerland.



Undersecretary de Vega with the panelists at the side event on wage theft in Geneva during the HRC54

Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega was among the panelists who delivered remarks during the side event of the 54th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC54). The said side-event was co-organized by the Philippines, through the Philippine Permanent Mission in Geneva, and the Migrant Forum in Asia, with the theme, "Promoting the Human Rights of Migrants by Addressing Wage Theft". The event was also co-sponsored by IOM and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and by the governments of Spain and El Salvador.

Undersecretary de Vega affirmed that the Philippines remains firmly dedicated to leading the efforts in migrant worker protection, as demonstrated by its continued collaboration in organizing international fora with other countries and international organizations, recalling that the Philippines previously organized a forum in 2022 with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka on "Strengthening Migrant Protection: Addressing Wage Theft Against Migrant Workers during COVID-19 Pandemic".

- Second Session of the International Dialogue for Migration, 5-6 October 2023, Geneva, Switzerland. Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega led the Philippine delegation to the Second Session of the International Dialogue on Migration (IDM). Under the theme "Think about Tomorrow, Act Today: The Future of Human Mobility and Climate Change," the discussions focused on the direct immediate and long-term effects of climate change, along with the slow-onset secondary effects such as the decline of agricultural productivity, which often leads to internal and external migration of people in agriculture-based economies. The session further promoted the outcomes of the 2022 Kampala Declaration and the 2023 SDG Summit, the outcome of which would be submitted as inputs to the discussions at the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP28).

Undersecretary de Vega delivered from the floor the Joint Statement on behalf of the 33 GCM Champion Countries which raised the several points, including the promotion of the need to [1] invest in programs that accelerate

the State's fulfillment of the DG goals; [2] strengthen joint analysis and information sharing; [3] develop adaptation and resilience strategies; [4] harmonize and develop approaches and mechanisms at subregional and regional levels; and [5] developing coherent approaches to address the challenges of migration movements in the context of sudden-onset and slow-onset natural disasters.



*Undersecretary de Vega delivers the Joint Statement of the 33 GCM Champion Countries during the Second Session of the IDM in Geneva*

Undersecretary de Vega was also one of the panel speakers at the side event on “Data Frontiers: Understanding Human Mobility in the Context of Disasters, Climate Change and Environment Degradation” where he conveyed the Philippines’ intent to strengthen its data and information gathering through the implementation of existing laws through which collected data on migration can be more complete and appropriately disaggregated. This can bring to light not only the countries of destination of most Filipino migrants, but also their local areas of origin from within the Philippines and the reasons for their migration. He also assured that the Philippine embassies and consulates around the world always monitor the environmental, economic and political conditions of the countries where there are concentrations of Filipino migrants, with a view of providing assistance, including repatriation, whenever the need arises.

### Courtesy Calls

- [Meeting with Study Visit Delegation from Bangladesh and Nepal under IOM Project PROSPER, 3 February 2023](#). Undersecretary for Migrant Workers’ Affairs Eduardo José A.

de Vega met with the study visit delegation from Bangladesh and Nepal as part of IOM’s regional project “Promoting Recruitment Industry Reform to Achieve Ethical Recruitment (PROSPER) in Bangladesh and Nepal”.



*Undersecretary de Vega, together with officers from OUMWA, ASPAC and UNIO, met with the delegations from Bangladesh and Nepal*

In line with the Philippine government’s efforts to promote fair and ethical recruitment, Undersecretary de Vega highlighted the Assistance-to-Nationals (ATN) program that provides help to Filipino nationals facing various issues and concerns abroad. This includes the creation of the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), the country’s new government agency mandated to provide ATN services to OFWs, taking over the DFA’s role in this aspect, in addition to continuing the overseas recruitment policies and practices of the former Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the International Labor Affairs Bureau (ILAB), and the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs).

He reaffirmed the Philippines’ commitment to fair and ethical recruitment processes, as delegates from Bangladesh and Nepal shared similar initiatives to protect their nationals. They likewise exchanged views on labor migration governance, foreign employment, and common experiences as migrant-sending countries and as champion countries of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

PROSPER aims to safeguard the rights of migrant workers through promotion of ethical recruitment practices. Recognizing the Philippines’ international recruitment model as among the best in the region, IOM facilitated the study visit of government officials, IOM representatives, and recruitment practitioners from Bangladesh and Nepal. The meeting was



joined by officers from the DFA-ASPAC and UNIO.

- Courtesy Call of United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) Regional Director for Asia Pacific David McLachlan-Karr, 15 February 2023. Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo received UNDCO Regional Director for Asia Pacific David McLachlan-Karr during the latter's courtesy call on 15 February 2023.



*Undersecretary Domingo and UNDCO Regional Director for Asia Pacific David McLachlan-Karr discuss the importance of anchoring the UNSDCF on the PDP to maximize its impact in promoting sustainable development in the Philippines (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

Mr. McLachlan-Karr visited the Philippines on an official trip to review the progress of the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in line with ongoing preparations for the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2024-2028. The UNDCO serves as the Secretariat of the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), which is responsible for coordinating the UN's efforts and providing programme countries technical support to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

During the call, Undersecretary Domingo recognized the role of the UN in augmenting the Philippine government's efforts to achieve its nationally-determined priorities and to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He urged the UN through the Resident Coordinator's Office and the UN Country Team to continue working closely with counterparts from the Philippine government to make sure that the new Cooperation Framework is responsive to the needs of Filipinos.

The UNSDCF or Cooperation Framework is a document that guides the relationship between the Philippines and the UN. Through a series of consultations between the Philippine government and the UN, the UNSDCF identifies strategic priority areas where the UN's support is deemed necessary.

- Meeting with Chief of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) for Asia and the Pacific, 12 July 2023. Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo met with UNDRR for Asia and the Pacific Chief Marco Toscano-Rivalta, on 12 July 2023 to discuss possible cooperation and initiatives on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).



*Undersecretary Domingo meets with UNCDRR for Asia and the Pacific Chief Marco Toscano-Rivalta*

In the brief meeting, Undersecretary Domingo expressed to Chief Toscano-Rivalta that exploring DRR efforts by the Philippines and the UNDRR is very timely as the Philippines will host the 2024 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR).

Chief Toscano-Rivalta noted that the private sector is currently more focused on investments in climate-change mitigation efforts than those on adaptation. Undersecretary Domingo said that the 2024 APMCDRR would be a great avenue to galvanize the interest of the private sector, extend their networks, and for the business community to complement the DRR efforts of national governments.

Both sides agreed that DRR efforts and initiatives should harmonize and synergize both

the climate-change and DRR communities.

- [Courtesy Call of Dr. Claudia Mahler, UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, 05 September 2023.](#) Dr. Claudia Mahler, UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, called on Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo on 05 September 2023. During the courtesy call, she recognized the Philippines as “a champion” and also recalled the invaluable role of Secretary Manalo in advocating for the rights of older persons during his term as the Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN in New York.

In accordance with Philippine advocacy on promoting the rights of vulnerable groups, Secretary Manalo highlighted that PH remains committed to advancing the rights of older persons, particularly in the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA). He assured Dr. Mahler of Philippine support for the development of an international legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons. He cited the Philippine Expanded Senior Citizens Act, which ensures access of older persons to health care and other services and establishes the Institute of Aging that conducts research to support evidence-based programming and decision-making.

Both Secretary Manalo and Dr. Mahler agreed that the issue of rights of older persons was a “gathering point” for the international community to work and unite on.

- [Courtesy Meeting with IOM, 03 October 2023, IOM Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland.](#)



*Undersecretary de Vega and IOM Deputy Director-General Ugochi Daniels with other officials of the DFA-OUMWA, Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva and IOM*

While in Geneva to attend the Second Session of the International Dialogue on Migration (IDM), the Philippine delegation led by Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega met with IOM Deputy Director General Ugochi Daniels and other IOM officials to discuss the collaboration between the IOM and the Philippines on assistance to migrants, in the context of climate change and natural and man-made disasters, as well as the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, and other matters of shared migration advocacies.

- [Meeting with ILO officials, 06 October 2023, ILO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland.](#) While in Geneva to attend the Second Session of the International Dialogue on Migration (IDM), the UMWA delegation, led by Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega, met with Ms. Katerine Landuyt, ILO Specialist in Labour Migration, with her team composed of Mr. Paul Tacon, Labour Migration Specialist, and Ms. Anne Beatrice Cindo, Junior Technical Assistant, to discuss the effects of and the creation of the DMW, the delineation of work between the latter and the DFA when it concerns ATN (i.e., OFWs and other types of OFs, FSPs with and without resident MWOs), and the various types of PH national funds for assisting overseas Filipinos.



*Undersecretary de Vega and UMWA delegation met with ILO officials*

The ILO side also requested the OUMWA delegation to help follow up conventions that are yet to be ratified by the Philippines. The above-signed advised the ILO to coordinate this matter with Geneva PM so the request could reach the appropriate PH office.

- [Visit to the Philippines of UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, 06-15 November 2023.](#) Secretary for Foreign

Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and other Philippine government officials welcomed the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Dr. Ian Fry, as he embarked on a 10-day official country visit from 06 to 15 November 2023.



UN Special Rapporteur Ian Fry during his courtesy call on Secretary Manalo and Representatives from various Philippine government agencies during an entry conference with SR Ian Fry (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

On the first day of his country visit, Dr. Fry met with representatives from various Philippine government agencies in a conference at the DFA.

Dr. Fry also met with DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga and Department of Justice (DOJ) Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla as he kicked off his visit which took him across the country, including Manila, Valenzuela City, Leyte, and Iloilo City to hold dialogues with local government officials, the local community and civil society groups.

During Mr. Fry's call on Secretary Manalo, the discussion focused on the Philippine support for the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, which was established by the Human Rights Council in 2021 following discussions on climate change and human rights in the Council that were shepherded by the Philippines, Vietnam and Bangladesh since 2009.

### Human Rights Reviews, Reports and Revalidas

- Constructive Dialogue on the Third Periodic Report on the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW), 30-31 March 2023, Geneva, Switzerland. The Philippine delegation was led by DMW Secretary Maria Susana V. Ople, and co-headed by Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN and other International Organizations in Geneva Evan P. Garcia, and Undersecretary Severo S. Catura, Executive Director of the Presidential Human Rights Committee Secretariat (PHRCS).



Philippine delegation to the Constructive Dialogue on the Third Periodic Report on the ICRMW led by DMW Secretary Maria Susana V. Ople, Philippine Permanent Representative Evan P. Garcia, and Presidential Human Rights Committee Secretariat Executive Director Severo S. Catura

The fourteen-member Committee of the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW), chaired by Mr. Edgar Corzo Sosa from Mexico, raised questions and shared observations on the Philippines' efforts to address the root causes of labor migration, feminization of migration, social cost of migration on families, especially children, reintegration of migrant workers, ATN policies, birth registration and statelessness, combating human trafficking and oversight of recruitment agencies as well as policies on foreign workers in the Philippines.

The CMW acknowledged the significant progress made by the Philippines in enhancing protective measures and mechanisms to uphold the rights and welfare of migrant workers, including, among others, the:

- Establishment of the DMW which is proof of the government's strong political will to pursue a rights-based approach to labor migration governance;
- Ratification of 8 key ILO conventions;



- Active advocacy in the international sphere for migrant workers' rights; and
- Established mechanisms for ATN, including the conclusion of bilateral labor agreements.

It likewise commended the young and gender-balanced composition of the delegation.

The Committee however raised concern on the following:

- Continuing challenge in making labor migration “a true choice” of the people and not a necessity due to lack of employment opportunities at home;
- The feminization of migration and the big number of children left behind suffering from separation;
- Absence of a comprehensive strategy to address the long-term impact of migration on children;
- Lack of empirical data on the psychosocial development impact of parental separation resulting from labor migration on children;
- Lack of data on migrant workers in the Philippines; and
- Lack of comprehensive study and data on long-term migration trends in the Philippines and their impact.

Majority of the recommendations outlined in the Committee’s Concluding Observations are already being undertaken, with the exception of issues concerning data collection, particularly on the abovementioned issues.

The Fourth Periodic Report of the Philippines is due on 1 May 2028.

The Philippines adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families in 1990 and ratified it in 1995. This international human rights treaty aims to protect the rights of migrant workers and their families and sets the standards for humane treatment, rights, and protections for migrant workers and their families.

- Constructive Dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 11 October 2023, Geneva, Switzerland. The Philippines highlighted gains and international leadership in advancing gender equality and women empowerment at

the Constructive Dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the country’s 9th periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), held on 11 October 2023, in Geneva, Switzerland.



*PCW Executive Director and Officer-in-Charge Kristine Rosary Yuzon-Chaves delivers her opening statement at the Constructive Dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the country’s 9th periodic report on the implementation of CEDAW*

The Philippines highlighted gains and international leadership in advancing gender equality and women empowerment at the Constructive Dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the country’s 9th periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), held on 11 October 2023, in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Philippine delegation was headed by Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) Executive Director and Officer-in-Charge Kristine Rosary Yuzon-Chaves, and co-headed by Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN and other International Organizations in Geneva Carlos D. Sorreta, and PHRCS Executive Director Severo S. Catura.

With gender mainstreaming as a strategy, the delegation informed the Committee that the Philippines has made significant strides in reducing the gender gap, ranking 16th globally in the 2023 Global Gender Gap Index of the WEF. During the review period from 2016 to 2019, normative frameworks were strengthened with the enactment of landmark laws addressing critical issues such as rape and sexual exploitation, child marriage, online sexual abuse of children, human trafficking, and the promotion of the rights and welfare of solo parents.

The government likewise adopted and implemented practical programs and initiatives to increase women's participation in government service, politics and the economy; promote sexual and reproductive health; improve access to justice for victims of gender-based violence, including trafficking in persons; and combat gender stereotypes and sexism.

The Philippines, the first country in Asia to adopt a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, is currently crafting its fourth-generation plan, through a consultative process involving civil society, particularly groups advocating for the rights of indigenous women, women with disabilities, and the youth.

In the international arena, the Philippines is a recognized champion of gender issues and will chair the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) next year. The Philippines is one of the main sponsors of the Human Rights Council resolution on combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and spearheads the biennial UN General Assembly Resolutions on Violence against Women Migrant Workers” and “Trafficking in Women and Girls.”

The Philippines is also the vision lead for gender mainstreaming in ASEAN. The ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) Philippines, together with ACW Malaysia, led the formulation of the ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework 2021–2025.

The 23-member Committee chaired by Ms. Ana Peláez Narváez of Spain offered observations and asked questions on the Philippines' compliance with obligations under CEDAW, particularly on the elimination of traditional stereotypes and gender-based violence; women's participation in political and public life; elimination of discrimination against women, including rural women, in education, employment, and health services (including the decriminalization of abortion), access to financial credit and economic and social life; equality of women and men before the law; and equal rights in marriage and family relations (including the legalization of divorce and prohibition of child marriage).

Joining the delegation were DOJ Undersecretaries Raul T. Vasquez and Jose R. Cadiz, Sandiganbayan Justice Maria Theresa V. Mendoza-Arcega, Deputy Court Administrator Jenny Lind Aldecoa-Delorino, and other officials from the DFA, DOJ, DA, DOH, DTI, DSWD, the Philippine National Police (PNP), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Bangsamoro Women Commission, and PHRCS.

The Philippines signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women on 15 July 1980 and ratified it on 05 August 1981. Under Article 18 of the Convention, States Parties undertake to submit, at least every four years, a national report on measures adopted to implement the provisions of the Convention.

### **Special Events**

- [Commemorative Activities for the International Humanitarian Law \(IHL\) Day 2023](#)
  - *Capacity Building on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) for the IHL Ad Hoc Committee, 10-12 July 2023, DFA*



*Representatives of the IHL Ad Hoc Committee during the Capacity Building on IHL Topics*

The Philippine International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Ad Hoc Committee (IAC) organized a training program at the DFA's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) on 10-12 July 2023 on “Bringing IHL Home: Capacity-building on IHL Topics for the Philippine IHL Ad Hoc Committee.”

The 3-day training facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) introduced a total 60 participants (24 onsite and 36 virtually) from various government agencies and civil society to basic IHL principles, civilian protection strategies during armed conflicts, Philippine advocacies on IHL, and national implementation and enforcement of IHL.

Participants from various national government agencies and stakeholders engaged in case studies and exchanged ideas on how to foster stronger partnerships across agencies and organizations to ensure effective responses to humanitarian challenges.

The IAC, co-chaired by the DFA and the Department of National Defense (DND), was established pursuant to Executive Order No. 134, s. 1999. It consists of relevant government agencies, the ICRC, the Philippine National Red Cross, and non-government organizations.

- *International Humanitarian Law Day 2023, 11 August 2023, Makati Diamond Residences*



*DFA, ICRC, OSETC, PRC, DND, PHRCS, UP IHR and PCBL officials grace the IHL Commemoration Event*

The DFA led the International Humanitarian Law Day 2023 with the theme, “*IHL: Gabay sa Makataong Pagsulong ng Kapayapaan*” on 11 August 2023 at Makati Diamond Residences. Over 400 individuals from 21 juridical bodies including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, civil society and academe, participated in the IHL Day in person and through virtual platforms.

Representatives from the DFA, PHRCS, the Philippine Red Cross (PRC), the ICRC Philippines, and DND delivered remarks highlighting the achievements of the Philippines in promoting and upholding the principles of IHL in realizing lasting peace and sustainable development after decades of armed conflict.

A symposium was also held on the different perspectives on IHL in the Philippines including legal and civil society perspectives, while highlighting good practices in the implementation of IHL, and the applicability of IHL to emerging technologies of warfare.

Among the distinguished panelists were Atty. Daniel Lising of the University of the Philippines Institute of Human Rights (UP IHR), Mr. Alfredo Lubang of the Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines (PCBL), Atty. Hazel Joves of the Office of Special Envoy on Transnational Crime (OSETC), and Ms. Sahar Haroon of the ICRC.

IHL is part of the body of international law that governs the conduct of war. It aims to limit the effects of armed conflicts among people who are not part of the hostilities. Pursuant to Executive Order No. 134, s. 1999, the 12th of August is declared as International Humanitarian Law Day. This annual celebration is co-hosted by the DFA and DND.

- *IHL Outreach, 04-05 December 2023, Marawi City*



*Assistant Secretary Almojuela with Filipino artist Anna Karina Jardin, Marawi City Mayor Atty. Sultan Majul Usman Gandamra, and officials from the Bangsamoro Women's Commission and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs during the unveiling of the peace mural in Marawi*

The DFA brought IHL home as it celebrated stories of humanity, peace, and resilience in the first-ever IHL Outreach in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur on 05 December 2023, in time for the Mindanao Peace Week.

Using Marawi City's experience and journey of reconstruction as a model, Assistant Secretary for the Office of the United Nations and International Organizations Maria Teresa T. Almojuela reaffirmed the Philippines' steadfast commitment to promoting and upholding core humanitarian principles in situations of armed conflict, especially for the most vulnerable.

The celebration concluded with the unveiling of a peace mural at the Sarimanok Sports Complex located at Ground Zero of Marawi City.



More than 200 children, local artists, Marawi citizens, national and local government officials, including Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) Deputy Chief Minister for Mainland Ali Bangcola Solaiman, and IHL Ad-hoc Committee members took turns painting the mural. Malaysia-based Filipino artist Anna Karina Jardin and Maranao artists from the Teach Peace Build Peace Movement collaborated in designing the mural.

This activity was undertaken in partnership with Marawi City Mayor Atty. Sultan Majul Usman Gandamra, who is recognized for inclusive governance, supporting youth and artists and artisans of the city, and elevating the city's economic performance.

As part of the two-day outreach event of the IHL Ad-hoc Committee, the DFA distributed school supplies and the book "Karapat-Dapat," a Filipino children's book on the rights of the child under the UNCRC to nearly 200 students from 4 primary schools in the city. Assistant Secretary Almojuela talked about the rights of civilians, including children, to be free and protected from harm in times of conflict under IHL, and much work is being done to ensure that all actors respect human rights and human dignity in times of peace and in situations of conflict.



*Elementary school students from Amai Pakpak Central Elementary School, Marawi Central Elementary Pilot School, Banggolo Elementary School, and Saduc Elementary School pose after a lecture reminding them of the importance of upholding and protecting the rights of every child*

The IHL Outreach was an opportunity for the DFA and the IHL Ad-hoc Committee to bring global and national-level discussions to the grassroots level, while capturing lessons and observations that will further inform the

programming of relevant government agencies to ensure programs respond to and showcase developments on the ground.

The DFA also engaged with local government officials, including Lanao del Sur Governor Mamintal Alonto Adiong, Jr. and Mayor Gandamra, to discuss efforts to engage international development partners and reconfigure cooperation and assistance to Marawi from a conflict-resolution lens to a more development-oriented focus, towards promoting sustainable progress marked by livelihood opportunities, resilient development, and lasting peace.



*DFA and the IHL Ad-hoc Committee members discuss with Marawi City Mayor Gandamra the transformation of Marawi City towards development*

The IHL Outreach Program stems from the Government's efforts to engage the public on rules that protect the most vulnerable in times of conflict, especially children.

Pursuant to Executive Order No. 143, the IHL Ad-hoc Committee, co-chaired by the DFA and DND, is composed of government agencies, non-government organizations, and civil society organizations tasked with formulating and implementing IHL-related programs.

- Commemorative Activities for the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  - *Special Lecture on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 12 December 2023, Ateneo de Manila University*

Professor Bertrand Ramcharan gave a special lecture for students from the School of Social Sciences and the European Studies Program of the Ateneo de Manila University, specifically on the Philippine influence on the UDHR and



international human rights framework. During his lecture, he engaged in an interactive discussion on the decades-long contributions of the Philippines in leading the formulation of key human rights documents.



Professor Bertrand Ramcharan during a special lecture on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the Ateneo de Manila University

Responding to the questions from the students, Professor Ramcharan reinforced the need to uphold the fundamental human rights principles especially in the face of new and emerging threats, including the situation in Gaza. The lecture was positively received by the students and the faculty present.

- *The Rising Tide of Climate Migrants: The Nexus of Migration, Climate Change and Human Rights*, 13 December 2023, FSI



Participants during the open forum of the Mabini Dialogue Series

DFA-UNIO, in partnership with FSI, invited Professor Dr. Bertrand Ramcharan on 23 December 2023 to deliver a lecture on *The Rising Tide of Climate Migrants: The Nexus of Migration, Climate Change and Human Rights* as part of The Mabini Dialogue Series.

His discussion covered the intersection of human rights and climate change, which he claimed has become a pressing concern

globally. Professor Ramcharan suggested possible fora for shaping the discourse and policy initiatives on this topic, including the UNFCCC and the UN Security Council.

Through the Mabini Dialogue, Professor Ramcharan engaged specialists, experts, and practitioners from the DFA, diplomatic corps, and government agencies to reframe approaches to the linkages between migration, climate change, and human rights.

### **Minister and Senior Official-Level Bilateral and Multilateral Engagements**

Minister and senior official-level bilateral and multilateral engagements were also undertaken by the DFA, including the following:

#### ***9th Philippines - Spain Forum, 06-07 February 2023, Madrid, Spain***



Undersecretary de Vega with officials of the DOE, DOTr, Philippine Embassy in Madrid, Spanish Embassy in Manila, PCCI, Philippines-Spain Business Council, Instituto Cervantes, and Casa Asia

The Philippines - Spain Forum (*Tribuna España - Filipinas*) is an annual platform for dialogue between the two countries with the purpose of strengthening bilateral ties in fields of common interest. Casa Asia and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) organize the forum in coordination with Instituto Cervantes, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and their embassies in both countries, and the European Union and Cooperation.

Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega delivered the opening remarks, in which he highlighted the long shared





history between the two countries and emphasized how well the welfare of overseas Filipinos is well promoted and their rights protected in Spain.

Undersecretary de Vega also participated as a Panelist at the session on the Role of Philippines and Spain within the Indo-Pacific Region. He noted that the Philippines, as a co-founder of ASEAN, adheres to and respects public international law, but at the same time remains independent in terms of domestic policies. He cited the UNCLOS norms which form the basis for the Philippines' sovereign rights to its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), as acknowledged by the 2016 Arbitral Award. He also expressed the hope that Spain could help the Philippines call on all participants to respect the UNCLOS norms as part of international law and conduct.

***Bilateral Meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa at the sidelines of the President's Official Visit to Japan, 10 February 2023, Tokyo, Japan***



*Secretary Manalo and Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa, joined by their respective delegations, discuss ways to further strengthen the Strategic Partnership between the Philippines and Japan (Photo courtesy of DFA-ASPAC)*

The two foreign ministers, highlighting the essential role Japan plays in the priority agenda of the President as well as other areas of synergies and complementarities, tackled the ever-increasing high-level engagements between the Philippines and Japan in pursuit of closer collaboration and stronger defense and security cooperation in addressing common security challenges. The Secretary expressed the Philippines' intent to facilitate exchanges and joint exercises among defense establishments, noting the signing of the Terms of Reference on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief activities, which was a commitment made during the inaugural foreign and defense ministerial meeting (2+2) in April 2022. Secretary Manalo also discussed with Foreign

Minister Hayashi the possibility of joint development and production of defense equipment even as the Philippines and Japan continue their defense transfer projects.

On the economic development front, Foreign Minister Hayashi reiterated Japan's commitment of JPY 600 billion of official development assistance (ODA) for the next two years, as well as its readiness to extend assistance via the Post Disaster Standby Loan 3, MRT 3 Rehabilitation, and the Communication, Navigation, Surveillance / Air Traffic Management (CNS/ATM) system of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA). On the other hand, Secretary Manalo conveyed the country's efforts to maximize market access of Philippine agricultural products such as cavendish bananas to Japan through a review of the Philippines-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (PJEPA) and proposed tariff elimination. He also looked forward to welcoming more investors and tourists to the Philippines.

Secretary Manalo acknowledged the assistance of Japan in helping the country develop its space program, in the reintegration of the people of Mindanao into the larger Philippine society, in augmenting the capabilities of our agencies for maritime law enforcement and domain awareness, and in developing even closer people-to-people links through tourism and labor cooperation.

Foreign Minister Hayashi conveyed the importance of emerging areas of cooperation such as space collaboration especially as Japan and the US recently signed a framework of cooperation for space exploration and its peaceful uses in January 2023. Secretary Manalo welcomed this proposal, conveying the need to have regional norms in place for such cooperation.

***First Responsible Use of AI in the Military Domain (REAIM) Summit 2023, 15-16 February 2023, The Hague, The Netherlands***

Noting artificial intelligence (AI) brings both potential benefits and serious legal, development and ethical concerns, the Philippines strongly called for enhancing international rules and human control over AI to ensure its responsible uses for peace at the first Military AI Summit.

In his statement, Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Carlos





D. Sorreta asserted that human beings must at all times exert control and judgment over weapons systems to ensure compliance with international and humanitarian law and accountability for the use of force.



*Undersecretary Sorreta delivers the Philippine statement at the REAIM Summit 2023 with the Foreign Ministers of The Netherlands and the Republic of Korea, the Defense Minister of The Netherlands, and other dignitaries at the Ministerial Roundtable (Photo courtesy of DFA-UNIO)*

During the Ministerial Roundtable, he highlighted President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s speech at the UN General Assembly that identified emerging technologies, such as AI, as among the most pressing of global challenges. He shared that the Philippines is among a group of countries at the UN pushing for a legally binding instrument that prohibits lethal autonomous weapons systems that can be used to conduct attacks outside the control of humans.

The REAIM Summit 2023 was co-hosted by The Netherlands and the Republic of Korea. Over 2,000 delegates from 80 countries attended the multistakeholder conference, which included high-level representatives from governments, armed forces, academe, the private sector, and civil society. For two days, delegates discussed in plenary and breakout sessions the risks and opportunities of the increasing use of AI in the military.

**59th Munich Security Conference (MSC), 17-19 February 2023, Munich, Germany**

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo called for the preservation and strengthening of multilateralism and a rules-based order amid the difficulties posed by post-pandemic recovery, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the escalating strategic

rivalry between the US and China. The Secretary was a lead discussant in an exclusive roundtable event and a speaker at a Main Stage Panel Discussion.

At the 17 February 2023 roundtable discussion on “*Bridging Troubled Waters – Mapping Escalation Potential in the Indo Pacific Region*”, he reiterated the Philippines’ firm resolve to address the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea issue through peaceful and legal means. He added that tensions caused by incidents and aggressive actions inconsistent with the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea are not conducive to promoting peace and stability.

At the 18 February 2023 Main Stage Panel Discussion entitled, “*Defending the UN Charter and the Rules-Based International Order*”, Secretary Manalo stated that the Philippines has consistently advocated a rules-based international order and that the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea vindicated the Philippines’ position that the nine-dash line is incompatible with the 1982 UNCLOS. He cited the broad support within the international community for the 2016 Arbitral Award as a mooring for a rules-based maritime regime in the South China Sea. He also underscored that the UN could have a bigger role in putting to fore the importance of adhering to the rule of law in the maritime domain.

Held annually, the MSC serves as a “unique platform for high-level debates on the greatest foreign and security policy challenges of our time.” In 2023, most of the discussions revolved around the ongoing impacts of the war in Ukraine, and various security flashpoints both on land and at sea, including the South China Sea.

**Summit Meeting of the NAM Contact Group in Response to COVID-19, 02 March 2023, Baku, Azerbaijan**



*Undersecretary de Vega delivering the Philippine statement at the Summit-level Meeting of the NAM Contact Group in Response to COVID-19 (Photo courtesy of DFA-OUMWA)*



Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega, the Head of the Philippine Delegation to the NAM meeting, delivered the national statement, in which he expressed appreciation to Azerbaijan for organizing the meeting, a testimony to the dedication of the Chair and NAM to address issues that will define the trajectory of global relations in the post-pandemic period. He also affirmed the Philippines' support for the Chair's proposal to develop institutional mechanism to address the recovery needs of Africa and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in line with President Marcos' call that the international system must remain fair for all peoples and must work for the most vulnerable, specially the marginalized.

Undersecretary de Vega also mentioned the country's priorities and strategies for national economic and social transformation for an inclusive and resilient society, as laid out in the PDP 2023-2028. In the context of strengthening health systems, boosting resilience and facilitating capacity-building, he said that the Philippines noted with interest the initiative of Kazakhstan to create an International Agency for Biological Safety (AIBS) in the implementation of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) to promote biological development for peaceful purposes. As reaffirmation of the Philippines' commitment to be a dependable partner of NAM for peace and prosperity of all nations, he stated that NAM must be utilized as a driving force for international coordination and cooperation for people-centered post-pandemic recovery.

The NAM Contact Group on the COVID-19 pandemic was established in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 back in May 2020 upon the initiative of Azerbaijan as NAM Chair. On 04 May 2020, the first online NAM Contact Group Summit with the theme, "United against COVID-19" was held with the participation of over 40 heads of state and government.

**Bilateral Meeting with the Vice Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, 02 March 2023, Baku, Azerbaijan**

During their bilateral meeting at the sidelines of the Summit-level Meeting of the NAM Contact Group in Response to COVID-19, Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega and Kazakhstan Foreign Affairs Vice Minister Kanat Tumysh agreed on the great potential to further strengthen Philippines-Kazakhstan relations

through, among others, tourism, cooperation between trade chambers and the upcoming political consultations. Vice Minister Tumysh mentioned that Kazakhstan is ready to open an embassy in Manila in 2025.



*Undersecretary de Vega and Kazakhstan Foreign Affairs Vice Minister Kanat Tumysh met at the sidelines of the Summit-level Meeting of the NAM Contact Group in Response to COVID-19*

Undersecretary de Vega welcomed the planned opening of the Kazakh embassy in Manila in 2025. He also assured Kazakhstan of the Philippines' due consideration of its requests, while conveying admiration at the progress and growth achieved by Kazakhstan since its independence and recalling the persistent support that the Philippines has provided to Kazakhstan and vice versa, including in the UN. In this context, Undersecretary de Vega requested Kazakhstan's support for PH's UN Security Council candidature for the term 2027-2028 while noting Kazakhstan's close relations with Kyrgyzstan. In response, Vice Minister Kanat Tumysh stated that they would look into the matter.

**Indo-Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption Meeting of the Second Summit for Democracy, 30 March 2023, Seoul, South Korea**



*South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol opens the Indo-Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption Meeting in Seoul, South Korea (left); Undersecretary Domingo and Philippine Ambassador to the Republic of Korea Theresa D. De Vega meet with Foreign Minister Park Jin (right)*





*Undersecretary Domingo delivers the national statement*

Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo reaffirmed the commitment of the Philippines to promoting democracy and the rule of law in the fight against corruption, in a statement delivered before world leaders at the Indo-Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption Meeting of the Second Summit for Democracy held in Seoul, South Korea on 30 March 2023.

He highlighted the country's eight-point socioeconomic agenda, which includes bureaucratic efficiency, and identified several key laws, such as the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and the Anti-Red Tape Act, that provide the backbone for the country's fight against corruption. He also enumerated measures to enhance transparency and accountability through the Freedom of Information (FOI) Acceleration Program and showcased the Citizen Participatory Audit of the Commission on Audit, an innovative program to promote inclusive governance and which has become a model for audit institutions around the world.

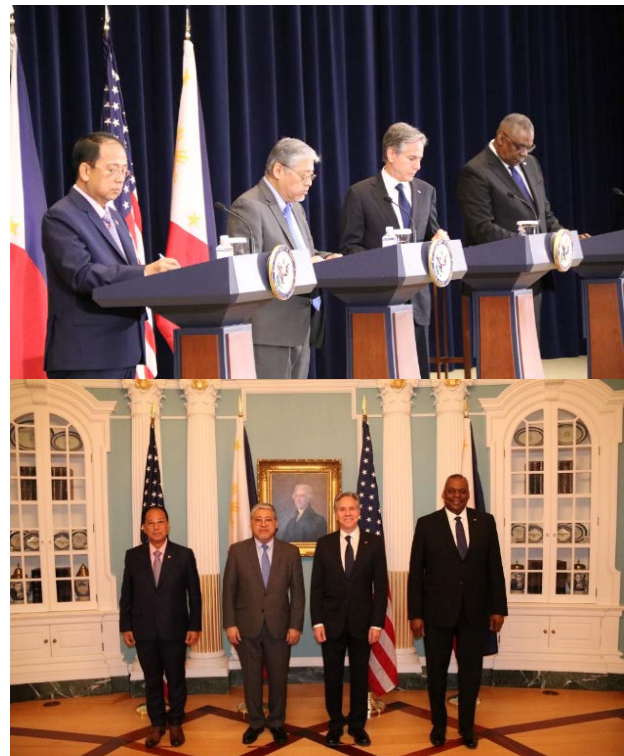
On the international front, the Philippines is a State Party to the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), the second country in Southeast Asia and the fifth in Asia to ratify the Convention. The Philippines also co-founded the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2011 to promote transparency and accountability, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies for better governance.

The Second Summit for Democracy, co-hosted by the US, Republic of Korea, Costa Rica, The Netherlands, and Zambia, served as a follow up to the December 2021 Summit and renewed the commitment of participating countries to pursue and implement a global agenda that includes the protection of democratic institutions, promotion of human rights, and enhanced public access to the Internet, among others.

The related Indo-Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption

Meeting adopted the Seoul Declaration on Challenges and Progress in Addressing Corruption, which drew attention to the role of international cooperation, non-governmental stakeholders, financial transparency and integrity, and technology in strengthening global and national anti-corruption initiatives.

**Third US-Philippines 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, 11 April 2023, Washington, D.C., USA**



*DND Senior Undersecretary and OIC Carlito Galvez Jr., Secretary Manalo, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III meet for the 3rd PH-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue*

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and DND Senior Undersecretary and Officer-in-Charge Carlito G. Galvez jointly led the Philippine delegation and met with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. This third iteration of the 2+2 is significant as it comes after a seven-year hiatus since the second Ministerial Dialogue was held in 2016. The Co-chairs issued a Joint Statement highlighting the rules-based order in the region, the importance of the alliance between the two countries, and economic and environmental cooperation. On the sidelines, Secretary Manalo was also a keynote speaker at the ASEAN Leadership Forum of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), where he shared his insights on the





Philippines-US alliance in the context of the Philippines' pursuit of its own sovereignty and territorial integrity, and its efforts to advance a more peaceful and prosperous region, while Secretary Austin and OIC/Senior Undersecretary Galvez established the Philippine-US Bilateral Defense Guidelines to modernize and strengthen defense and security cooperation and ensure that the Alliance remains relevant and responsive to current and emerging threats.

***Bilateral Meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang, 22 April 2023, Manila***

The Philippines and China committed to strengthen ties and maintain the momentum of cooperation during the bilateral meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang held on 22 April 2023.



*Secretary Manalo and Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang*

The meeting was the first between the two officials and built upon the inaugural and historic state visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to China, which laid the guideposts for ushering in comprehensive Philippines-China relations. It was under the Administration of President Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr. that diplomatic relations were established in 1975.

During the meeting, both officials acknowledged the progress in the implementation of the state visit outcomes from the President's state visit in January 2023. The ministers also highlighted infrastructure cooperation as a key sector for Philippines-China economic and development engagement, especially

with the Philippines' Build Better More program dovetailing with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and looked forward to the early completion of ongoing infrastructure cooperation projects.

Aside from bilateral cooperation, the two foreign ministers also exchanged views on strategic and regional issues. Secretary Manalo reaffirmed the Philippines' adherence to the One China Policy, while at the same time expressing concern over the escalating tensions across the Taiwan Strait. He also emphasized that the Philippines pursues an independent foreign policy, which seeks to ensure stability and prosperity in the region.

The visit of Foreign Minister Qin Gang came on the heels of the 23rd Foreign Ministry Consultations and 7th Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea that were convened back-to-back in Manila in March 2023.

***Munich Leaders Meeting, 14-16 May 2023, Tokyo, Japan***

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo participated in the Munich Leaders Meeting (MLM) and engaged in policy discussions from 14 to 16 May 2023 in Tokyo, Japan.

The MLM aimed to connect European and American leaders with their counterparts in the Indo-Pacific region to discuss ideas on how to contribute to regional and global stability. During the visit, Secretary Manalo joined policymakers and experts in sharing insights on a range of issues, including the Indo-Pacific security architecture, nuclear security, and new partnership opportunities arising from the shifting geopolitical landscape in the region and beyond.

***Official Visit to the Philippines of Senator Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, 16-18 May 2023***

At the invitation of Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, Senator Penny Wong, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, undertook an official visit to the Philippines on 16-18 May 2023.

At their bilateral meeting, Secretary Manalo and Minister Wong positively assessed the state of the Comprehensive Partnership between the Philippines and Australia, shaped by 77 years of



close engagement and cooperation and guided by the Philippines-Australia Plan of Action 2021-2022. They discussed the progress and renewed the commitment between the two countries in elevating the bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership.



Secretary Manalo and Australian Senator and Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong during the latter's official visit to the Philippines (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

During the visit, Minister Wong announced that Australian ODA to the Philippines would increase to an estimated AUD 89.9 million in 2023-2024 to support programs including cooperation on shared priorities including inclusive economic growth, education, training and scholarships, disaster and climate resilience, and peace and stability in Mindanao. This is in addition to an AUD 10.95 million commitment to support the Philippines to establish a new immunization information system and a strengthened laboratory network and surveillance system, addressing disruptions to routine immunization during the pandemic.

Both sides reaffirmed mutual commitment to supporting the Philippines' 2027-2028 candidature and Australia's 2029-2030 candidature for the UN Security Council.

The Secretary and Minister also exchanged views on the region, including the South China Sea, and agreed on the importance of securing a region that is open, stable and prosperous, where sovereignty is respected and where States operate in accordance with agreed rules and norms. They reiterated the importance of all states adhering to international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Secretary acknowledged Australia's strong support for the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Tribunal Award.

### **Official Visit to the Philippines of Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly, 18-21 May 2023**



Secretary Manalo and Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly during the latter's official visit to the Philippines (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

Upon the invitation of Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly visited the Philippines on 18-21 May 2023, and had robust exchanges with the President, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo, DOJ Secretary Crispin Remulla, and National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano on matters relating to the West Philippine Sea, cooperation in energy, defense and maritime sectors, as well as regional and global issues of mutual concern.

One of the highlights of the ministerial visit was the announcement made by the Foreign Minister during the call with Philippine President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. regarding the opening of the Agriculture Canada office in Manila, which was welcome news for the country. Apart from opening up another opportunity to advance trade relations between the two countries, the regional hub will play a significant role and serve as a staging point for enhancing technical cooperation and fostering increased trade of crucial agricultural and agri-food products between the Philippines and Canada. The Philippines has reciprocated by expressing support for Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, and the Canada-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement.

### **Meeting with Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade Johan Forssell, 19, May 2023, DFA**

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo met with Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade Johan Forssell at the DFA on 19 May 2023.



Secretary Manalo meets Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade Johan Forssell (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

The meeting was a venue to discuss and mutually appreciate the positive trajectory of Philippines-Sweden bilateral ties, thrusted forward by sustained high level exchanges and growing trade and defense relations.

Secretary Manalo and Minister Forssell reaffirmed their two countries' shared values and underscored the importance of having and preserving a rules-based international order for both security and trade matters. Both the Secretary and the Minister jointly looked forward to increased bilateral trade and investments following the Minister's visits and meetings.

**Historic Official Visit of Israeli Foreign Minister Eliyahu Cohen to Manila, 06 June 2023**



Secretary Manalo with Israeli Foreign Minister Eliyahu Cohen during the latter's visit to Manila (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

Israeli Foreign Minister Eliyahu Cohen visited the Philippines on 06 June 2023, the first made by an Israeli Foreign Minister since 1967. He met with Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo to discuss priority areas of cooperation.

Secretary Manalo pointed out that the relationship between the Philippines and Israel is a unique and enduring one, characterized by friendship, goodwill and strong people-to-people ties which predated the founding of the Israeli state. These ties have deep roots, going back to the time when President Manuel L. Quezon, through his "Open Door Policy", provided safe haven for an estimated 1,300 Jewish refugees who were fleeing the Nazi regime.

Secretary Manalo highlighted the need to expand cooperation in areas such as defense and security, tourism, trade and investment, agriculture, science and technology, and people-to-people ties. In the context of the geopolitical environment in the Middle East and Asia, the Philippine side emphasized the importance of promoting peace and stability, as well as confidence-building with key partners in these regions.

A Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection was signed by Secretary Manalo and Foreign Minister Cohen after the conclusion of the bilateral meeting. The agreement will provide opportunities for both Israel and the Philippines to share best practices in addressing common challenges related to the environment, preservation of ecosystems, disaster risk management, and promotion and dissemination of environmental technologies.

Foreign Minister Cohen also paid a courtesy call on President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

**Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security, 15-16 June 2023, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**



The Philippines, represented by Ambassador FlorCruz, participates in the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security (Photo courtesy of Mongolian MFA)

Led by Philippine Ambassador to China Jaime A. FlorCruz, the Philippines participated in the





Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security hosted by Mongolia on 15-16 June 2023. This was the first time the Philippines participated in the annual event. Philippine participation signified an increased Philippine interest to engage with Mongolia and regional countries, and was well received by Mongolia, as both countries prepare to celebrate their 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2024.

The Dialogue is an initiative of Mongolia since 2014 to promote dialogue on various issues affecting the region. Some 60 participants from the government and representatives from academia from Asia, Americas and Europe were in attendance in this year's Dialogue.

***Official Visit of Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo to India, 27-30 June 2023, New Delhi, India***

During his official visit to India on 27-30 June 2023, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo paid a courtesy call on Indian Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar where the Secretary highlighted the milestones achieved in Philippine-India relations. With the upcoming 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2024, he also underlined the importance of further improving the partnership between the two countries.



*Secretary Manalo paid a courtesy call on Indian Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar during the former's visit to India*

Vice President Dhankar meanwhile stressed the many areas on which the Philippines and India can further strengthen cooperation. These include pharmaceuticals, digital economy, agriculture, defense and the blue economy, among many others. He also emphasized the commonalities and

shared values between the two countries, bringing the Philippines and India closer together as democracies.

On 28 June 2023, Secretary Manalo also met with the Philippine honorary consular officers in India and Nepal. Present in the engagement were Mrs. Rajashree Birla, Philippine Honorary Consul General in Mumbai; Mr Suraj Vaidya, Philippine Honorary Consul General in Kathmandu; Mr. B Narendran, Philippine Honorary Consul in Chennai; Mr. Deepak Kumar Khemka, Philippine Honorary Consul General in Kolkata; Mr. Retnasamy Swaminathan, Philippine Honorary Consul in Mumbai; and Mr. E N Rangaswami, Philippine Honorary Vice-Consul in Chennai. Secretary Manalo personally thanked the officials for their service to the Philippines and requested their continued support in promoting and protecting Philippine interests in India and Nepal.

On 29 June 2023, Secretary Manalo co-chaired the 5th meeting of Philippines-India Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC) with Indian Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar. The two ministers discussed the full spectrum of the Philippine-India bilateral relationship and exchanged views on regional and international issues.



*Secretary Manalo with Indian Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar during the 5th meeting of Philippines-India JCBC*

Secretary Manalo also met with a number of Filipino community leaders during a meet and greet event hosted by the Philippine Embassy in New Delhi on 28 June 2023.



**Bilateral Meetings with NAM Countries, 03-06 July 2023, Baku, Azerbaijan**

Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Carlos D. Sorreta discussed bilateral and multilateral cooperation with 14 countries at the sidelines of the Senior Officials and Ministerial Meetings of the NAM in Baku, Azerbaijan from 03-06 July 2023.

In line with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s instructions to look for non-traditional partners in trade, Undersecretary Sorreta met with high level representatives from Azerbaijan, Cuba, Iran, Mauritania, Namibia, Venezuela, Mozambique, Bolivia, India, Kazakhstan, Uganda, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

**NAM Ministerial Meeting, 06-07 July 2023, Baku, Azerbaijan**



Undersecretary Sorreta leads the Philippine delegation to the NAM Ministerial Meeting

The Philippines, led by Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Carlos D. Sorreta, participated in the NAM Ministerial Meeting on 06-07 July 2023 in Baku, Azerbaijan, where the country urged Member States to unite and address key challenges affecting the world and regional developments, and the NAM to uphold the interests of developing countries on key issues such as climate change, access and responsible use of new technologies like AI, and overcoming inequality, underdevelopment, and racism.

Undersecretary Sorreta emphasized NAM should not be divided by external powers and remain true

to the Movement's founding principles: self-determination, non-interference, sovereign equality and independence, and true non-alignment, and must be at the forefront of promoting peace and security and peaceful settlement of disputes. He requested NAM's support for the Philippines candidature for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the term 2027-2028.

**Philippines-US-Japan Trilateral Cooperation, 14 July 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia, and 22 September 2023, New York, USA**



Philippine, US and Japanese officials at the Second Trilateral PH-US-JP Ministerial Meeting

The Philippines, US, and Japan agreed to enhance trilateral cooperation and coordination, particularly to address common maritime security challenges, holding a number of meetings at the level of Leaders and Foreign Ministers, as well as National Security Advisers. The inaugural trilateral meeting among the Foreign Ministers of the Philippines, US and Japan was held on 14 July 2023 in Jakarta, Indonesia at the sidelines of the 56th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting. A second trilateral meeting was held at the sidelines of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in New York on 22 September 2023. The meeting built on the discussions among President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, and US Vice President Kamala Harris on the sidelines of the EAS held in Jakarta on 06-07 September 2023. The three ministers emphasized that trilateral cooperation among the PH, US, and Japan can contribute to peace and stability in the Indo Pacific, and their common prosperity, and can produce positive benefits for the countries in the region and beyond.

**Meeting with Republic of Korea Foreign Minister Park Jin, Jakarta, Indonesia, 14 July 2023**

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo underscored the comprehensive partnership



between the Philippines and the Republic of Korea in key areas and highlighted the convening of the Philippines-Republic of Korea Bilateral Consultations held in Seoul, South Korea in February 2023. He expressed the readiness of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to welcome Republic of Korea President Yoon Suk-Yeol to the Philippines at a mutually convenient date, and expressed also that he looked forward to the convening of a trilateral meeting among the Philippines, Japan and the Republic of Korea's national security agencies.

Foreign Minister Park conveyed the Republic of Korea's appreciation to the Philippines for its assistance to a flight carrying over 200 Korean passengers that made an emergency landing in the Philippines in June 2023 and for the invitation extended to him to visit the country. Foreign Minister Park also sought support for Korean enterprises who are interested in participating in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) modernization program. He also raised cooperation in the fields of infrastructure, maritime, and climate change, and the Republic of Korea's Audacious Initiative.

**Meeting with Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Lasha Darsalia, 19 July 2023, New York, USA**

At the sidelines of the ECOSOC HLPF on Sustainable Development in New York on 11-22 July 2023, Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega had a bilateral meeting with Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Lasha Darsalia. They discussed the UN resolutions on trafficking in persons and on internally displaced persons, among many other issues, including their respective candidatures to international organizations.

**Official Visit to the Philippines of Portuguese Foreign Minister João Gomes Cravinho, 28 July 2023**

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo welcomed Portuguese Foreign Minister João Gomes Cravinho on 28 July 2023 and hosted a lunch meeting at the Manila Diamond Hotel to discuss issues of mutual interest and advance areas of cooperation in several sectors.

Foreign Minister Cravinho was in the Philippines for an official visit from 27 to 29 July 2023. It is the first

visit to the Philippines by a Portuguese Foreign Minister since both sides established diplomatic relations in 1946. Today's meeting builds on the strides made by both countries during the 3rd Philippines-Portugal Political Consultations held in 2019.



*Secretary Manalo and Portuguese Foreign Minister João Gomes Cravinho during the latter's official visit to the Philippines*

Both sides capped their meeting by exchanging views on regional and international developments as well as on areas of cooperation in the multilateral sphere.

**Meeting with UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs James Spencer Cleverly, 29 August, Manila**



*Secretary Manalo with UK Foreign Secretary James Spencer Cleverly during the latter's visit to the Philippines (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo met his British counterpart, the UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs





James Spencer Cleverly, on 29 August 2023 in Manila.

Secretary Manalo and Secretary Cleverly both affirmed the Philippines' and UK's commitment to elevate their Enhanced Partnership, launched in November 2021. The two countries are working together to reinvigorate relations through various forms of cooperation on several priority areas such as trade and investment, climate action, defense, maritime, and high-level political exchanges.

The two Foreign Secretaries also discussed regional and international issues of mutual concern. Secretary Manalo thanked the UK for advocating a rules-based international order and supporting the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea. After their meeting, the two Secretaries signed a declaration expressing the Philippines and the UK's intent to develop a Framework Agreement that would further define the scope of bilateral cooperation under the Enhanced Partnership.

***Official Visit of Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo to Argentina in commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations, 11-16 September 2023, Buenos Aires, Argentina***



*Secretary Manalo and Argentine Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship Lic. Santiago Andres Cafiero met at the Palacio San Martin*

Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo officially visited Buenos Aires, Argentina on 11-16 September 2023 upon the invitation of Argentine Minister for Foreign Affairs Santiago Andres Cafiero. At their bilateral meeting, the two Ministers discussed the deepening Philippines-Argentina cooperation agenda, which includes: cooperation in science and technology, specifically in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and outer space; technical cooperation in agriculture; trade and investments; and cultural relations.

Secretary Enrique Manalo also gave a talk in an event organized by the Argentine Council for International Relations (CARI) and at the University of Belgrano in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 13 and 14 September 2023, respectively, where he spoke about the longstanding bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries in the multilateral arena. Secretary Manalo also emphasized the different areas of cooperation between the two countries, including culture, trade and investment, outer space, among others. He also highlighted that both countries are responsible international actors committed to multilateralism and the rules-based order.

The Secretary's visit is the first by a Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary in more than a decade, and it came at a time when the Philippines and Argentina celebrated 75 years of diplomatic relations. The visit demonstrated the country's commitment to forging stronger and deeper bonds with Latin America, a region with which the Philippines shares many cultural and historical commonalities.



*Secretary Manalo speaks before students and faculty of the University of Belgrano in Buenos Aires during his visit to Argentina*

***6th Philippines-Australia Ministerial Meeting (PAMM), 10 October 2023, Adelaide, Australia***

The PAMM is a 2+2 high-level policy dialogue co-chaired by Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and DTI Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual with their Australian counterparts, Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Trade and Tourism Minister Don Farrell, respectively, to help chart the direction of Philippines-Australia relations following the elevation of bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership. The 2023-2026 Plan of Action was adopted during the PAMM.



Australian Trade and Tourism Minister Don Farrell, Secretary Manalo, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, and DTI Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual during the Joint Press Conference at the sidelines of the 6th PAMM (Photo courtesy of DFA-ASPAC)

Official Visit of Dutch Foreign Minister Hanke Bruins Slot to the Philippines, 30 October 2023



Secretary Manalo with Dutch Foreign Minister Hanke Bruins Slot during the latter's official visit to the Philippines

On the first official visit of a Dutch foreign minister to the Philippines in more than three decades, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Dutch Foreign Minister Hanke Bruins Slot agreed to further expand the trade and investment links between the Philippines and The Netherlands. The two ministers exchanged views on regional issues of mutual concern, and discussed defense and security cooperation including law enforcement and cybersecurity. As representatives of maritime nations, the two also discussed cooperation on maritime safety and support for the more than 22,000 Filipino seafarers working across various sectors of The Netherlands' global fleet.

In view of the latest developments in the West Philippine Sea, Secretary Manalo thanked The Netherlands for the statements of concern issued by its Embassy over illegal and reckless maneuvers against Philippine vessels at sea.

Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), 10 November 2023, Cook Islands

Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo, the Philippines' Special Envoy to the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), delivered the Philippine Statement on Panel 1 on "Political Leadership & Regionalism, Peace & Security" at the 52nd Post-Dialogue Forum of the PIF and Related Meeting, held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands on 10 November 2023.



Special Envoy to the PIF, Undersecretary Domingo, delivers the Philippine Statement at the PIF's 52nd Post-Dialogue Forum

Undersecretary Domingo also had a meeting with Director for Policy Joel Nilon and Senior Economics Adviser Denton Rarawa of the PIF Secretariat at the PIF sidelines on 09 November 2023.

Meetings with Japanese Officials on the sidelines of the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, 15-16 December 2023, Tokyo, Japan

On 15 December 2023, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Japanese National Security Adviser Akiba met and discussed the solid relations between the Philippines and Japan in the field of defense, security, and the economy. They also discussed prevailing regional issues including the tensions in the West Philippine Sea.

On the same day, the Secretary also met with Japan-Philippines Parliamentary Friendship League (JPPFL) Chairman Moriyama Hiroshi and JPPFL members during which they discussed cooperation in the field of agriculture, ODA, prospects for increased economic cooperation including through RCEP, resumption of the PJEPA General Review particularly on the agricultural sector, overall Philippines-Japan bilateral relations, the South China Sea, and the strengthening of cooperation in the field of human resources.



Secretary Manalo also met with Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko on the on 16 December 2023 on the sidelines of ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit. The Secretary shared his intention to forward some proposals on the trilateral process of the Foreign Ministers, and suggested that SOM-level officials work with each other on this. He looked forward to the progress of the proposed Philippines-Japan Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA). The Secretary and the Foreign Minister discussed cooperation through the Official Security Assistance (OSA). Foreign Minister Kamikawa raised the proposed Visa Waiver Agreement for PH diplomatic passport holders, and the Nikkeijin issue.

**Bilateral Political Consultations and Joint Committee Meetings**

With the aim of further strengthening bilateral cooperation across various areas of cooperation, the DFA led the following senior official-level bilateral political consultations and joint committee meetings with several partners. These include:

- 10th PH-US Bilateral Security Dialogue (19-20 January 2023, Manila)



*Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro and US Assistant Secretary of State Dan Kritenbrink co-chaired the 10th PH-US Bilateral Strategic Dialogue*

- 78th PH-Finland Political Consultations (25 January 2023, Manila)



*Undersecretary Lazaro and Finnish State Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Johanna Sumuvuori with Philippine and Finnish delegations during the Political Consultations (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

- 8th PH-Republic of Korea Policy Consultation (17 February 2023, Seoul, South Korea)



*Undersecretary Lazaro meets First Vice Minister Cho Hyundong of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea for the 8th PH-ROK Policy Consultations (Photo courtesy of ROK-MOFA)*

- Inaugural PH-Kenya Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (22 February 2023, Nairobi, Kenya)



*The Philippine Delegation is led by Undersecretary Lazaro, while the Kenyan Delegation is jointly led by Principal Secretary for Foreign Affairs Dr. Abraham Korir SingOie and Principal Secretary for Diaspora Affairs Roseline K. Njogu of the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs*

- 6th PH-Spain Political Consultation (10 March 2023, Madrid, Spain)



*Undersecretary Lazaro meets Spain's Secretary of State for Foreign and Global Affairs Angeles Moreno Bau*





- 6th PH-Romania Political Consultations (13 March 2023, Bucharest, Romania)



*Undersecretary Lazaro meets Romania's Secretary of State Traian Laurențiu Hristea*

- 4th PH-Croatia Political Consultations (20 March 2023, Manila)



*Undersecretary Lazaro, Philippine Ambassador-designate to Austria Evangelina Lourdes "Luli" Arroyo-Bernas, Director General for Political Affairs Petar Mihatov of the Croatian Foreign Ministry, Croatian Ambassador to the Philippines Nebojša Koharović, with residency in Indonesia are joined by their respective delegations for the 4th PH-CR Political Consultations (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

- 23rd PH-China Foreign Ministry Consultations (23 March 2023, Manila)



- 7th PH-China Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea (24 March 2023, Manila)



- Inaugural PH-Azerbaijan Political Consultations (04 April 2023, Manila)



- 5th PH-Sweden Political Consultations (20 April 2023, Stockholm, Sweden)



*Undersecretary Lazaro, head of the Philippine delegation at the 5th PH-SE Political Consultations, stands with Ambassador Niclas Kvarnström, head of the Swedish delegation, and their respective delegations*

- 6th PH-Norway Bilateral Consultations (21 April 2023, Oslo, Norway)



*Philippine and Norwegian delegations deep in discussions during the 6th PH-NO Political Consultations*



- 54th PH-Argentina Bilateral Consultation Meeting (25 April 2023, Manila)



*Renewal of the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation by an Exchange of Notes with Undersecretary Lazaro and Argentine Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Foreign Policy Claudio Javier Rozenzwaig*

- 7th PH-New Zealand Foreign Military Consultations (23 June 2023, Wellington, New Zealand)



*Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Aileen S. Mendiola-Rau headed the Philippine Delegation to the 7th PH-NZ Foreign Ministry Consultations hosted by New Zealandw, Mr. Mark Talbot, Divisional Manager for South and Southeast Asia Division of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the New Zealand Delegation*

- 6th PH-Brazil Bilateral Consultation Meeting (27 June 2023, Manila)



*Undersecretary Lazaro and Brazilian Secretary for Asia and the Pacific Eduardo Paes Saboia before the 6th PH-BR Bilateral Consultation Meeting (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

- 5th Meeting of the PH-India Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (29 June 2023, New India)

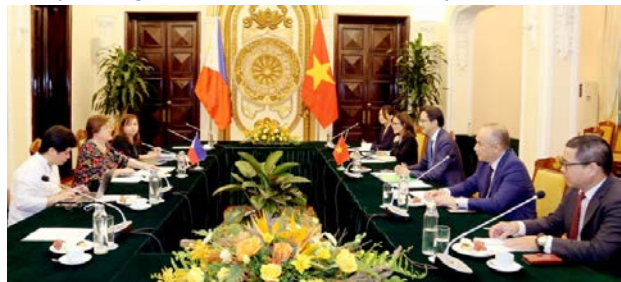


- Senior Officials Meeting of the 6th PH-Thailand Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (03-04 July 2023, Bangkok, Thailand)



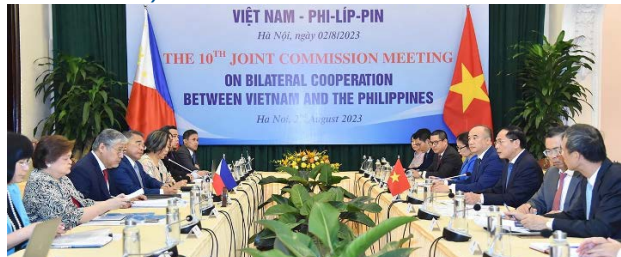
*Undersecretary Lazaro and Thai Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs Sarun Charoensuwan convened the 6th Senior Officials' Meeting of the PH-TH Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation (Photo courtesy of the Thai MFA)*

- Inaugural PH-Vietnam Political Consultations (01 August 2023, Hanoi, Vietnam)



*Undersecretary Lazaro co-chairs with Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Đỗ Hùng Việt the 1st PH-VN Political Consultations (Photo courtesy of Vietnamese MOFA)*

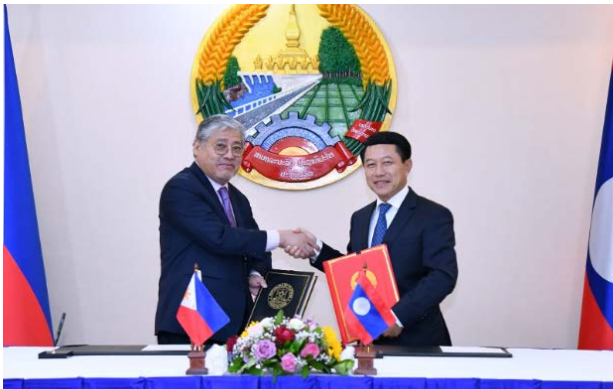
- 10th PH-Vietnam Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation (01-02 August 2023, Hanoi, Vietnam)



*Members of the Philippine and Vietnamese delegation headed by Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Vietnamese Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son*



- 2nd PH-Lao PDR Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation (03-04 August 2023, Vientiane, Lao PDR)



Secretary Manalo and Laos' Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith concluded the 2nd PH-LA Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation

- 3rd PH-Brunei Darussalam Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation (15 August 2023, Manila)



Philippine delegation comprising of Undersecretary Lazaro, Assistant Secretary Mendiola-Rau, Philippine Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam Marian Jocelyn R. Tirol-Ignacio, DND Director for Strategic Assessment and International Affairs Marita I. Yoro and other DFA officials met with the Brunei Darussalam delegation headed by the Permanent Secretary for Politics and International Organization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pengirah Norhashima Pg. Md. Hassan

- 6th PH-Chile Bilateral Consultation Meeting (18 August 2023, Manila)



Undersecretary Lazaro and Chilean Secretary General for Foreign Policy Alex Wetzig before the Bilateral Consultation Meeting (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

- 8th PH-Iraq Joint Commission (30 August 2023, Manila)



Assistant Secretary for Middle East and African Affairs Mardomel Melicor, Iraq Council of Ministers General Secretariat Jassam Adwan and Philippine and Iraqi delegations (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

- Inaugural PH-Estonia Political Consultations (04 October 2023, Tallinn, Estonia)



Undersecretary Lazaro co-chaired the Inaugural PH-EE Political Consultations with the Estonian Undersecretary for Political Affairs Kyllike Sillaste-Elling (Photo courtesy of Warsaw PE)

- 6th PH-Canada Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation (12 October 2023, Ottawa, Canada)



Undersecretary Lazaro led the Philippine delegation to the 6th PH-CA Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation





- 3rd Sub-Committee Meeting on Good Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights under the PH-EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) (25 October 2023, Brussels, Belgium)



*Assistant Secretary for European Affairs Maria Elena P. Algabe and Philippine Ambassador to Belgium Jaime Victor B. Ledda with the EU Delegation*

- 3rd PH-Georgia Political Consultations (31 October 2023, Tbilisi, Georgia)



*Undersecretary Lazaro meets with Deputy Minister Guram Guramishvili of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia to discuss economic and maritime cooperation*

- PH-UK Inaugural Strategic Dialogue (06 November 2023, London, UK)



*Undersecretary Lazaro co-chaired the Inaugural PH-UK Strategic Dialogue with the UK's Minister of State for Indo-Pacific Anne-Marie Trevelyan (Photo courtesy of London PE)*

- PH-Czech Republic Inaugural Political Consultations (14 November 2023, Prague, Czech Republic)



*Undersecretary Lazaro and co-chair Director General Kateřina Sequensová of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs lead the Inaugural PH-CZ Political Consultations*

- 10th PH-Switzerland Political Consultations (16 November 2023, Berne, Switzerland)



*Assistant Secretary Algabe and Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Assistant State Secretary for Asia and Pacific Heinrich Schellenberg lead the Philippine and Swiss delegations, respectively*

- 3rd PH-France High-Level Political Consultations Meeting (17 November 2023, Paris, France)



*Director for Asia and Oceania of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs Benoît Guidée and Undersecretary Lazaro reaffirmed their commitment to fostering robust bilateral relations (Photo courtesy of French MEFA)*



- 3rd PH-Mexico Bilateral Consultation Mechanism (24 November 2023, Virtual)



*Assistant Secretary for American Affairs Jose Victor V. Chan-Gonzaga and Director-General for Asia-Pacific of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fernando Gonzales Saiffe lead the virtual discussions in the 3rd Meeting of the PH-MX Bilateral Consultative Mechanism*

- Inaugural PH-Nepal Bilateral Consultation Mechanism (06 December 2023, Manila)



*Assistant Secretary Mendiola-Rau and Joint Secretary and Head of the South East Asia and the Pacific Division of Nepal Krishna Prasad Dhakal led their respective delegations in the inaugural PH-NP Bilateral Consultation Mechanism which they both hailed as a significant step towards the regular conduct of substantive and productive dialogues between the two countries*



## B. OTHER MEETINGS/CALLS/VISITS/EVENTS

### Argentina

Travel of Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. De Vega to Buenos Aires, Argentina as Special Envoy of the President to the inauguration of Argentine President Javier Gerardo Milei, 10 December 2023

### Australia

- Visit of Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defense Richard Marles hosted by the Department of National Defense, 22 February 2023
- Courtesy call of the Special Envoy for Southeast Asia of Australia, Nicholas Moore, on Executive Secretary Lucas P. Bersamin, 23 March 2023
- Meeting between DTI Secretary Alfredo Pascual and Australian Trade and Tourism Minister Don Farrell during the latter's visit, 20-25 April 2023

### Bangladesh

- Courtesy call of the Ambassador of Bangladesh, H.E. Borhan Uddin, on Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Aileen S. Mendiola-Rau, 23 August 2023
- Briefing conducted by Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Aileen S. Mendiola-Rau for the 25-member delegation from the National Defence College of Bangladesh, 18 September 2023

### Brazil

- Meeting between Assistant Secretary for American Affairs Jose Victor V. Chan-Gonzaga and Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director for India, South and Southeast Asia Everton Lucero, 13 March 2023
- Courtesy call of the Brazilian delegation headed by Foreign Undersecretary Eduardo Paes Saboia on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, 13 October 2023

### Brunei Darussalam

- Visit of Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Z. Duterte to Brunei Darussalam, 12-13

June 2023

- Bilateral meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Brunei Second Foreign Minister Erywan Yusof on the sidelines of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, 11 July 2023
- Presentation of Credentials by the Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam, H.E. Megawati Manan, 23 March 2023

### Belgium

Meeting between Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro and the President of the Direction Committee of Belgium's Federal Public Service-Foreign Affairs, Ms. Theodora Gentzis, 29 June 2023, Brussels, Belgium

### Cambodia

- Meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and the newly appointed Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, H.E. SOK Chenda Sophea, on the sidelines of the 43rd ASEAN Summit, 07 September 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Courtesy call of Hon. Kittisethabindit Cheam Yeap, PhD., First Vice President of the National Assembly and Head of the Cambodian Delegation to the 31st Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, on House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez on the sidelines of the 31st Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, 24 November 2023

### Canada

High level visit of Canadian Minister for International Development Harjit S. Sajjan, 03 March 2023

### Chile

- Courtesy call of Chilean Ambassador to the Philippines Alvaro Jara Bucarey on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, 22 March 2023
- Presentation of credentials of Chilean Ambassador to the Philippines Alvaro Jara Bucarey, 23 March 2023





- Courtesy call of Chilean Ambassador to the Philippines Alvaro Jara Bucarey on Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations, 19 April 2023
- First PH-Chile Joint Economic Commission Working Group Meeting, 15 August 2023, Makati City
- Meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Chilean Foreign Minister Alberto Van Klaveren at the sidelines of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, 18 September 2023

### **China**

- Phone conversation of Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, 17 February 2023
- Meeting between Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro and Chinese Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Nong Rong on the margins of the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting and Related Meetings, 6 March 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Phone conversation of Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, 20 December 2023

### **Colombia**

Working visit of OAA Acting Director Miguel Hornilla to Bogota, Colombia, 17-19 September 2023

### **Costa Rica**

Virtual meeting between Assistant Secretary for American Affairs Jose Victor V. Chan-Gonzaga and Costa Rican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship Head for Bilateral Affairs Rolando Madrigal, 04 August 2023

### **Cuba**

Courtesy call of Cuban Non-Resident Ambassador to the Philippines Florentino Batista González on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, 12 June 2023

### **Ecuador**

- Presentation of credentials of Ecuadorian Non-Resident Ambassador to the Philippines Javier Chavez Pareja, 13 April 2023
- Courtesy call of Ecuadorian Non-Resident Ambassador to the Philippines Javier Chavez Pareja on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, 27 April 2023

### **European Union**

- Meeting between Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Nathaniel G. Imperial and EU Special Envoy for the Indo-Pacific Richard Tibbels, 13 March 2023, Manila
- Meeting between Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro and European External Action Service Secretary General Stefano Sannino, 29 June 2023, Brussels, Belgium

### **Fiji**

Bilateral meeting between Special Envoy to the 52nd PIF Jesus S. Domingo and High Commissioner of Fiji in New Zealand and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ratu Inoke Kubuabola at the sidelines of the 52nd PIF, 09 November 2023, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

### **France**

- Courtesy Call on Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Carlos D. Sorreta by Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, France's Minister of State for Development, Francophonie, and International Partnerships
- Presentation of Credentials of French Ambassador-designate to the Philippines Marie Fontanel, 20 September 2023
- Bilateral Meeting between DND Secretary Gilberto C. Teodoro, Jr. and French Minister for the Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu

### **Greece**

Courtesy call on DMW Secretary Susana V. Ople by Greek Ambassador to the Philippines Ioannis Peditotis, 04 July 2023

### **Guatemala**

- Presentation of credentials of Guatemalan Non-Resident Ambassador to the Philippines Manuel Estuardo Roldán Barillas, 03 October 2023
- Courtesy calls of Guatemalan Non-Resident Ambassador to the Philippines Manuel Estuardo Roldán Barillas on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Assistant Secretary for American Affairs Jose Victor V. Chan-Gonzaga, 04 October 2023

### **Honduras**

Bilateral meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Honduran Secretary of Foreign Affairs Eduardo Enrique Reina Garcia on the margins of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, 21 September 2023, New York, USA



### **India**

- Phone call between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, 18 October 2023.
- Courtesy call of Ambassador Shambhu Kumaran on President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., 23 October 2023
- Meeting between Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Aileen S. Mendiola-Rau and Indian Ambassador Shambhu Kumaran, 14 December 2023
- Meeting between Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Aileen S. Mendiola-Rau and Philippine Honorary Consul in Mumbai, Mr. Retnasamy Swaminathan, 20 December 2023

### **Indonesia**

Courtesy call of Minister Mudzakir of the Economic Section of the Indonesian Embassy in Manila on Assistant Secretary for International Economic Relations and incoming Philippine Ambassador to Indonesia Gina A. Jamoralin, 14 March 2023

### **Ireland**

Meeting between Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo and Ireland's Minister of State at the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science with Special Responsibility for Skills and Further Education Niall Collins, 14 March 2023, Manila

### **Italy**

- Courtesy call on DND Secretary Gilberto C. Teodoro, Jr. by the Italian delegation led by Ambassador Marco Clemente and visiting Deputy Minister of Defence Matteo Perego di Cremnago, 11 July 2023
- 75th anniversary of the formal establishment of Philippines-Italy diplomatic relations Gala Dinner and Book Launch held at the Grand Hyatt Manila, 07 August 2023

### **Japan**

- Courtesy calls of Haguida Koichi of the Policy Research Council of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan on Vice President Sara Z. Duterte, Senator Imee Marcos and Executive Secretary Lucas P. Bersamin, 29 April 2023
- Courtesy calls of Japanese Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare Kato Katsunobu on Vice President Sara Z. Duterte and Executive Secretary Lucas P. Bersamin, 02-03 May 2023

- Courtesy call of Ms. Mori Masako, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Japan on Women Empowerment, on Vice President Sara Z. Duterte, 03 May 2023
- PH-Japan-US Trilateral Summit Meeting on the sidelines of the 43rd ASEAN Summit, 07 July 2023, Manila
- PH-Japan-US Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 14 July 2023, Manila
- Courtesy calls of Hon. Moriyama Hiroshi, Chairman of Japan-Philippines Parliamentary Friendship League (JPPFL), on President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., Senate President Juan Miguel F. Zubiri, House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, DND Secretary Gilberto C. Teodoro, Jr., and National Security Adviser Eduardo M. Año, 31 July-2 August 2023
- Courtesy calls of the Hon. Natsuo Yamaguchi, President of Komeito International Affairs Bureau on President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., Senate President Juan Miguel F. Zubiri, House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, and Executive Secretary Lucas P. Bersamin, 16-17 August 2023
- PH-Japan-US Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 22 September 2023, Manila
- Manila Transit of Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko with short meeting with Acting Secretary for Foreign Affairs Charles C. Jose, 09 October 2023, Manila
- Courtesy call of Director-General/Assistant Minister for Southeast and Southwest Asian Affairs Nakamura Ryo on Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Aileen S. Mendiola-Rau, 20 October 2023
- Joint call of Hon. Hiraguchi Hiroshi and the Japanese delegation to the 31st Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum on Senate President Juan Miguel F. Zubiri and House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, 24 November 2023
- Bilateral meeting between President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio on the sidelines of the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, 17 December 2023, Tokyo, Japan
- Audience of the President and the First Lady with His Majesty The Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, 18 December 2023, Tokyo, Japan

### **Kenya**

Courtesy call of Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P.



Lazaro on Kenyan Minister of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs Dr. Alfred N. Mutua, 21 February 2023, Nairobi, Kenya

#### **Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)**

- Visit of DPRK Non-Resident Ambassador Kim Je Bong to Manila for the Vin d'honneur, 12 June 2023
- Courtesy Call of DPRK Non-Resident Ambassador Kim Je Bong on Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Aileen Mendiola-Rau, 13 June 2023
- Courtesy Call of DPRK Non-Resident Ambassador Kim Je Bong on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, 14 June 2023

#### **Republic of Korea (ROK)**

- Farewell Call of ROK Ambassador Kim Inchul on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, 14 June 2023
- Courtesy Call of ROK Ambassador-designate Lee Sang-hwa on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Aileen S. Mendiola-Rau, 07 July 2023
- Calls of ROK Speaker Kim Jin-pyo on Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, 24 July 2023; and on Vice President Sara Z. Duterte and Senate President Juan Miguel F. Zubiri on 25 July 2023
- Courtesy Call of ROK Ambassador-designate Lee Sang-hwa on Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro, 22 August 2023
- Meeting between President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol at the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit, 7 September 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Courtesy Call of ROK Ambassador-designate Lee Sang-hwa on Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo, 19 September 2023
- Visit of Vice President and Secretary of Education Sara Duterte to ROK, 20-21 September 2023
- Phone conversation between Secretary Enrique A. Manalo and Foreign Minister Park Jin, 07 December 2023

#### **Laos**

Introductory call of Ambassador Sonexay Vannaxay of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN

Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro, 16 March 2023

#### **Malaysia**

- Introductory call of Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato' Seri Diraja Dr. Zambry Abd Kadir on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo ahead of the official visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim to the Philippines, 28 February 2023
- Presentation of credentials by Malaysian Ambassador Dato' Abdul Malik Melvin Castelino bin Anthony, 23 March 2023

#### **Maldives**

Bilateral meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Maldives Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid at the sidelines of the Munich Conference, 16 May 2023, Tokyo, Japan

#### **Marshall Islands**

Meeting between Special Envoy to the 52nd PIF Jesus S. Domingo and Marshall Islands Foreign Minister Jack Ading at the sidelines of the 52nd PIF, 09 November 2023, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

#### **Micronesia**

Courtesy call of Micronesian President Wesley W. Simina on President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., 13 October 2023

#### **Mongolia**

50th anniversary of the formal establishment of bilateral relations between the Philippines and Mongolia, 11 October 2023

#### **Nepal**

Courtesy call of Joint Secretary and Head of the South East Asia and the Pacific Division Krishna Prasad Dhakal of Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, 05 December 2024

#### **Nicaragua**

Bilateral meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Nicaraguan Minister for Foreign Affairs Denis Moncada Colindres on the margins of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, 21 September 2023, New York, USA

#### **Pakistan**

Courtesy calls of Pakistani Ambassador Imtiaz Kaz on Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Aileen S. Mendiola-Rau, 19 October 2023; and on Senator Robinhood Padilla and Secretary for



Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, 25 October 2023

#### **Panama**

Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Philippines-Panama diplomatic relations, 28 September 2023

#### **Palau**

Meeting between Special Envoy to the 52nd PIF Jesus S. Domingo and Palau Minister of State Gustav Aitaro at the sidelines of the 52nd PIF, 10 November 2023, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

#### **Panama**

Working visit of the Philippine delegation headed by Assistant Secretary for International Economic Relations Paul Vincent L. Uy to Panama in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Philippines-Panama diplomatic relations, 10-11 August 2023

#### **Peru**

- Presentation of credentials and Tete-a-Tete with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. of Peruvian Non-Resident Ambassador to the Philippines Cecilia Galarreta Bazan, 15 August 2023
- Courtesy call of Peruvian Non-Resident Ambassador to the Philippines Cecilia Galarreta Bazan on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, 16 August 2023
- Meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Peruvian Foreign Minister Ana Cecilia Gervasi at the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting 04 September 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Courtesy calls of Peruvian Non-Resident Ambassador to the Philippines Cecilia Galarreta Bazan on Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Charles C. Jose and Assistant Secretary for American Affairs Jose Victor V. Chan-Gonzaga, 08 November 2023; and on Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro, 09 November 2023

#### **Samoa**

Meeting between Special Envoy to the 52nd PIF Jesus S. Domingo and Samoan Prime Minister Afioga Fiame Naomi Mata'afa at the sidelines of the 52nd PIF, 10 November 2023, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

#### **Singapore**

- Presentation of Credentials by Singapore Ambassador Constance See Sin Yuan, 08 June 2023
- Visit of Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Z. Duterte to Singapore, 13-14 June 2023
- Sideline meetings of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. during the 10th Asia Summit organized by the Milken Institute, 13-15 September 2023

#### **Spain**

125th Anniversary of the Siege of Baler and the 21st Philippine-Spanish Friendship day, 29-30 June 2023, Baler, Aurora

#### **Sri Lanka**

- Courtesy Call by Sri Lankan Ambassador Chanaka Talpahewa on Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Aileen S. Mendiola-Rau on 2 October 2023
- Courtesy call by Sri Lankan Ambassador Chanaka Talpahewa on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo on 12 December 2023, following the Ambassador's presentation of credentials and courtesy call on the President, 10 December 2023

#### **Thailand**

- Meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly Meeting, 20 September 2023, New York, USA
- Courtesy call of Prof. Pornpetch Wichitcholchai, President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Thailand and Head of the Thai Delegation to the 31st Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, on Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri on the sidelines of the APPF, 25 November 2023

#### **Timor-Leste**

- Bilateral meeting between President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. with then Timor-Leste Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak at the sidelines of the 42nd ASEAN Summit, 09-11 May 2023, Labuan Bajo, Indonesia
- Bilateral Meeting between Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Timor-Leste Foreign Minister Bendito Dos Santos Freitas on the sidelines of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, 12 July 2023



### **Türkiye**

- Courtesy call on Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Ma. Esperanza Christina G. Frasco by Turkish Ambassador Niyazi Evren Akyol, 12 September 2023
- Courtesy call on the Secretary for Foreign Affairs by Turkish Ambassador Niyazi Evren Akyol, 04 October 2023
- Courtesy call on Vice President Sara Z. Duterte by Turkish Ambassador Niyazi Evren Akyol, 09 October 2023

### **Uganda**

Courtesy call of Ugandan Minister of Information and Communications Technology and National Guidance, Dr. Chris Baryomunsi, on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, 13 June 2023

### **United Kingdom**

Meeting between Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Nathaniel G. Imperial and UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Director for North East Asia and China Dan Chugg, 08 March 2023, Manila

### **United States of America**

- Courtesy call of US-Philippines Society Directors on President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. at the sidelines of their annual board meeting in Manila, 30 January 2023
- Meeting between Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro and US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit Senior Officials Meeting, 08 March 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Visit of US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland, 05-07 March 2023
- Visit of US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, 16-19 April 2023
- Visit of US INDOPACOM Commander Admiral John Aquilino to attend the Closing Ceremony of the 2023 Exercise Balikatan, 29 April 2023
- Visit of US Deputy Trade Representative Sarah Bianchi, 25-28 June 2023
- Visit of Business Executives for National Strategy (BENS) Delegation, 09-13 July 2023
- Visit of US Department of State Counselor and Senior Policy Advisory to the Secretary of State, with the rank of Undersecretary, Derek Chollet, 15-17 July 2023
- Meeting between President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and the US-ASEAN Business

Council 2023 Philippine Business Mission, 09 August 2023

- Visit of US Department of State Chief Economist Dr. Emily Blanchard, 17 October 2023

### **Venezuela**

Farewell call of Venezuelan Ambassador to the Philippines Capaya Rodriguez Gonzalez on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, 15 June 2023

### **Vietnam**

- Courtesy call of Vietnamese Party Central Committee's Commission for External Relations, led by Vice Chairman Trương Quang Hoài, on Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro, 22 June 2023
- Courtesy call of Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo on Vietnamese Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính on 02 August 2023
- Courtesy call of Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Đỗ Hùng Việt on Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro, 22 August 2023
- Courtesy call of H.E. Nguyen Duc Hai, Vice President of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, on Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri and House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez at the sidelines of the 31st Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum



## C. AGREEMENTS SIGNED

To strengthen the Philippines' bilateral relations with other countries, maximize the potential for mutually-beneficial gains, and protect overseas Filipinos, the DFA forged agreements with bilateral partners, especially after every state visit of the President. These centered on defense, culture, counterterrorism, trade and investments, technology and data protection, and migrant workers' protection.

### With Argentina

- Exchange of Notes on the renewal of the Philippines-Argentina Agreement on Cultural Cooperation, 25 April 2023
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA) and the Argentine National Commission on Space Activities (CONAE) on Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, 25 April 2023

### With Australia

- Joint Declaration on a Strategic Partnership, signed by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, 08 September 2023, Manila
- Memorandum of Understanding on a Work and Holiday Visa Arrangement, signed by Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Australian Ambassador HK Yu, 08 September 2023, Manila
- Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on National Soil Health Strategy, signed by Secretary of Science and Technology and Ambassador HK Yu, 08 September 2023, Manila

### With Belgium

Philippines-Belgium Joint Plan of Action for 2023 to 2027

### With Brazil

Exchange of Notes attesting to the mutual desire of the Philippines and Brazil to fully implement the Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Cooperation on Training of Diplomats between the Foreign Service Institute of the Philippines and

Brazil's Rio Branco Institute, 27 June 2023

### With Canada

- Memorandum of Understanding on Science, Technology and Innovation between the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and Universities Canada, 16 June 2023
- Philippines-Canada Agreement on Canada's Dark Vessel Detection (DVD) System, 12 October 2023
- Memorandum of Understanding on higher education and research between the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Universities Canada, 07 November 2023

### With Chile

Philippines-Chile Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, 18 August 2023

### With China

- Protocol of Phytosanitary Requirements for Export of Fresh Durian from the Philippines to China between the Department of Agriculture of the Republic of the Philippines and the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China, 04 January 2023
- Preferential Buyer's Credit Loan Agreement on Three Priority Bridges (Contract Package 1) between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, Acting by and through the Department of Finance as Borrower and The Export-Import Bank of China as Lender, 04 January 2023
- Mutual Recognition Agreement between the Bureau of Customs of the Republic of the Philippines and the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China on Authorized Economic Operator Programme, 04 January 2023
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Information and Communications Technology of the Republic of the Philippines and Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of the People's Republic of China, 04 January 2023





- Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Trade and Industry of the Republic of the Philippines and the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China on eCommerce Cooperation, 04 January 2023
  - Memorandum of Understanding between National Economic and Development Authority of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and China International Development Corporation Agency of the Government of the People's Republic of China on Development Cooperation Plan (2023-2025), 04 January 2023
  - Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative, 04 January 2023
  - Joint Action Plan on Agricultural and Fisheries Cooperation between the Department of Agriculture and the Republic of the Philippines and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 04 January 2023
  - Implementation Program of the Memorandum of Understanding on Tourism Cooperation between the Department of Tourism of the Republic of the Philippines and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China (2023-2028), 04 January 2023
  - Handover Certificate Two China-Aid Bridges Project in Manila, Philippines between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the People's Republic of China, 04 January 2023
  - Handover Certificate of the Philippine-Sino Center for Agricultural Technology-Technical Cooperation Phase III between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the People's Republic of China, 04 January 2023
  - Government Concessional Loan Agreement on Three Priority Bridges Crossing Pasig-Marikina River and Manggahan Floodway Bridges Construction Project (Contract Package 1) between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, Acting by and through the Department of Finance as Borrower and The Export-Import Bank of China as Lender, 04 January 2023
  - Framework Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Provision of Concessional Loan by China to the Philippines, 04 January 2023
  - Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the People's Republic of China, 04 January 2023
- With Cuba**  
Memorandum of Understanding on Political Consultations, 13 December 2023, Manila
- With European Space Agency**  
Copernicus Space Component Technical Operating Arrangement between the European Space Agency – Philippine Space Agency, 11 December 2023, Paris, France
- With France**
- Letter of Intent between the Secretary of National Defense of the Republic of the Philippines and the Minister for the Armed Forces of the French Republic on Strengthening Bilateral Defense Cooperation, which was signed by Secretary Gilberto C. Teodoro, Jr. and Minister Sébastien Lecornu in Manila on 02 December 2023
  - Memorandum of Understanding between the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines and the Institut National de la Propriété Industrielle or the French Patent and Trademark Office, which was signed on 17 May 2023 at the sidelines of the International Trademark Association (INTA) General Assembly in Singapore
- With India**
- Agreement Regarding Indian Grant Assistance for Implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIP), 07 February 2023
  - Memorandum of Understanding on the Constitution of a JWG on Financial Technology, 19 June 2023
  - Memorandum of Understanding on Enhanced Maritime Cooperation, 22 August 2023
  - Standard Operating Procedure on Sharing of White Shipping Information, 23 August 2023
- With Ireland**  
Memorandum of Understanding establishing a Bilateral Consultations Mechanism for the Philippines and Ireland, 11 August 2023
- With Israel**  
Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in



the Field of Environmental Protection, 06 June 2023

#### **With Japan**

- Exchange of Notes (E/N) on North South Commuter Railway (NSCR) (Malolos - Tutuban), 09 February 2023
- E/N on NSCR Extension (Malolos, Bulacan to Clark International Airport and Tutuban (Solis, Manila) to Calamba, Laguna), 09 February 2023
- E/N on Loan Agreement for NSCR Project, 09 February 2023
- E/N on Loan Agreement for NSCR Extension Project, 09 February 2023
- Umbrella Terms of Reference on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Cooperation, 09 February 2023
- Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) in the field of Information and Communications Technology, 09 February 2023
- MOC between the Department of Agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries on Agriculture Cooperation, 09 February 2023
- E/N on Supplemental Loan for the Metro Rail Line 3 Rehabilitation Project of the Department of Transportation, 26 May 2023
- E/N on Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship 2023 Academic Year 2024-2025, 23 June 2023
- E/N on Non-Project Grant Aid for the Philippine Coast Guard, 08 August 2023
- E/N on Post Disaster Stand-by Loan Phase 3, 08 August 2023
- MOC the Field of Tourism between the Department of Tourism of the Republic of the Philippines and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, 3 November 2023
- MOC on Mining Sector between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Republic of the Philippines and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, 3 November 2023
- E/N on Non-Project Grant Aid for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, 03 November 2023
- E/N for the Official Security Assistance for the Philippines securing coastal radars for the AFP to enhance maritime domain awareness capability and maritime security, 03 November 2023
- MOC between the Philippine Coast Guard and the Japan Coast Guard, 17 December 2023

- Standard Operation Procedure for Information-sharing on Maritime Domain Awareness, 17 December 2023
- MOC between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Republic of the Philippines and the Ministry of Environment of Japan in the Field of Environmental Protection, 17 December 2023

#### **With Kenya**

Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Fields of Arts and Culture, 22 February 2023, Nairobi, Kenya

#### **With Korea (ROK)**

Free Trade Agreement between South Korea and the Philippines signed at the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit, 07 September 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia

#### **With Honduras**

Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of Mechanism for Political Consultations, signed by Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Honduran Secretary of Foreign Affairs Eduardo Enrique Reina Garcia on the sidelines of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, 21 September 2023, New York, USA

#### **With Papua New Guinea**

Memorandum of Understanding on Policy Consultations, signed by Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister Justin Tkatchenko at the sidelines of APEC, November 2023, San Francisco, California, USA

#### **With Singapore**

Arrangement between the Department of National Defense of the Republic of the Philippines and the Ministry of Defence of Singapore Concerning the Conduct of Education, Training Assistance and Support Activities on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, 02 June 2023, Singapore

#### **With Spain**

Memorandum of Understanding between the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority and the Port Authority of Cartagena, Spain, 10 October 2023, Cartagena, Spain

#### **With the United States of America**

Agreement for Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and



the Government of the United States of America  
Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy (123  
Agreement), 16 November 2023, San Francisco,  
California, USA





## D. ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY EFFORTS

### Participation in the National Tourism Development Plan 2023-2028 Sectoral Consultations

The DFA participated in the sectoral consultations for the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023-2028, which was approved by the President in May 2023. The NTDP seeks to establish a sustainable, resilient, and competitive Philippine tourism and lays down strategies to transform the country into a tourism powerhouse in Asia.

### Support for the Export Development Council and the Philippine Export Development Plan 2023-2028

The Office of International Economic Relations (OIER), as DFA representative to the Export Development Council (EDC), participated in the meetings of the Council and its Networking Committee that aim to address the bottlenecks, problem areas and constraints which adversely affect the country's export industry and, at the same time, recommend actions to support and improve export competitiveness.

It also participated in the finalization of the Philippine Export Development Plan (PEDP) 2023-2028 Planning and Convergence Tool delineating the Department's Programs, Activities and Projects (PAPS) related to the PEDP.

### Distribution of Tourism Promotional Materials to Foreign Service Posts

DFA-OIER coordinated with the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) and the Board of Investments (BOI) to obtain updated promotion materials on tourism and investment opportunities in the Philippines. These promotional materials were, in turn, sent to FSPs to support their cultural, tourism, trade, and investment-related activities and shared with other DFA offices upon request for visiting Philippine honorary consular matters.

### Support for Inbound and Outbound Missions

To contribute to the promotion of Philippine trade, investment, and tourism, DFA-OIER assisted FSPs and government agencies, such as the DTI, in finalizing arrangements for inbound and outbound business missions.

From July to September 2023, OIER spearheaded and led the "Philippine Trade, Investment and Tourism Roadshow and Working Visit" in Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico on 07-16 August 2023, which was also participated in by the Office of American Affairs and the Philippine Embassy in Mexico, the supervising Post of the Honorary Consuls in the three countries. The DFA delegation for the said Roadshow also lobbied for the candidatures of the Philippines in the UN.

### Economic Research Microsite

DFA-OIER's Economic Research Unit (ERU) is constantly updating the Economic Research Unit Microsite, accessible via the DFA Mega Menu. This year, ERU has included additional features in the Microsite including the Economic Dashboard and the inclusion of Trade and Investment Relations (TIRs) prepared by DTI. Additionally, the ERU is consistently updating the data presented in the Economic Dashboard and Infographics, incorporating statistics coming from the PSA, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), DOT, DTI, among others.

### Fisheries Conservation, Marine Debris and the Blue Economy

DFA-OIER consolidated the DFA's position paper on Senate Bill No. 1993 "Blue Economy" and Senate Bill No. 09 "Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS)".

A survey on national legislation and policies related to the Blue Economy and PENCAS was conducted among Philippine FSPs. The purpose of this effort was to compile a reference for the Philippines in



approving the Senate Bill on Blue Economy and to aid legislation regarding the establishment of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

**Online Tourism Briefing**

The Online Tourism Briefing was co-organized with the DOT, TPB and DTI on 09 May 2023. The briefing drew 333 participants from various FSPs and Philippine Trade and Investment Centers (PTIC).

The event highlighted the important role that FSPs and PTICs play in promoting the Philippines to foreign travelers, the mandate of the TPB, and the promotion of the “Bisita Be My Guest” (BBMG) Program.

**International Roadshow for Philippine Startups**

The International Roadshow for Philippines Startups collaboration with Round One was held on 23-25 May 2023, with more than 100 prospective investors from different geographic regions. The briefing showcased 6 innovative Startups namely: BECXs, CLEVA, Cocotel, LeapedHub, and Tipaklong. Through the briefing, the ERU hopes to raise awareness regarding the Philippines Startup Ecosystem and invite potential foreign investors in the growth of Startups.

**Philippines’ Involvement in Free Trade Agreements**

DFA-OIER actively pursued the Presidential ratification and Senate concurrence on the RCEP Agreement. The regional FTA enhances the Philippines’ market access in the ASEAN and its five trading partners (Australia, China, Korea, Japan, and New Zealand) and helps strengthen the supply chain for various goods and services needed by the country.

DFA is also actively participating in the scoping study of the Philippines-EU Free Trade Agreement, which will potentially provide continuity in the market access currently being enjoyed by the Philippines in the EU, under the EU Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+).

**The Philippines in WTO**

DFA-OIER actively pursued the ratification of the Joint Statement Initiative on Services Domestic

Regulation, an agreement in the World Trade Organization (WTO) aimed at increasing transparency, predictability, and efficiency of authorization procedures for service providers planning to do business in foreign markets. It is also pursuing the ratification of the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement which supports the SDG on securing fish stocks by disallowing subsidies for Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUUF) and Overcapacity and Overfishing (OCOF).

DFA is also actively involved in the formulation of Philippine foreign trade policies in interagency bodies such as the Committee on Tariff and Related Matters (CTRM), the Technical Committee on WTO Matters (TCWM), and the Interagency Committee on Trade in Services (IACTS).

**Philippine Trade, Tourism and Investment Roadshows**

***Philippine Trade, Tourism and Investment Roadshow to Costa Rica, 07-08 August 2023***



*Members of the Philippine delegation headed by Assistant Secretary Uy with officials of Costa Rican MFA pose after meetings to discuss potential areas of cooperation between the Philippines and Costa Rica*

Officials from the DFA led by Assistant Secretary for International Economic Relations Paul Vincent L. Uy embarked on a Philippine Trade, Tourism and Investment Roadshow to Costa Rica on 07-08 August 2023 to revitalize bilateral relations and explore trade and investment opportunities between the Philippines and Costa Rica.

The delegation met with the Costa Rican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, and the Ministry of Foreign Trade. In their meetings, both sides exchanged ideas on prospects for bilateral cooperation, such as in trade and investment, agriculture, environmental protection, renewable energy, disaster risk reduction and management, volcanology, space technology and observation,



creative and content industries, academic cooperation between diplomatic institutes and some regional affairs such as south-south cooperation.

Both sides also discussed the possibility of convening the inaugural meeting of the Philippines-Costa Rica Bilateral Consultative Mechanism at a date mutually convenient.

**Working Visit to Panama, 10-11 August 2023**



*Panama's Minister for Culture Giselle González Villarrué informs the Philippine delegation headed by Assistant Secretary Uy, of Panama's readiness to strengthen cultural ties with the Philippines*

A two-day visit of the Philippine delegation headed by Assistant Secretary for International Economic Relations Paul Vincent L. Uy to Panama on 10-11 August 2023 highlighted 50 years of Philippines-Panama diplomatic relations as both parties unlocked new areas for bilateral cooperation.

The delegation met with officials from the Panamanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Aquatic Resources as well the Ministry of Commerce.

The Working Visit aims to explore ways to revitalize cooperation with Panama in the areas of trade and investments, maritime, agriculture, energy, space, culture, tourism, disaster risk reduction and management, and combating human trafficking.

**Philippine Delegation marking 70 Years of Philippines-Mexico Diplomatic Relations**

The 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Mexico has been marked by the visit of a Philippine delegation led by Assistant Secretary for International Economic Relations Paul Vincent L. Uy to Mexico on 14-15 August 2023. During the visit, the delegation engaged in a series of meetings

and discussions with Mexico's government officials and business leaders to deepen partnerships and promote greater cooperation in a diverse range of cooperation such as in trade and investments, agriculture, tourism, cultural cooperation, disaster risk reduction and management, academic cooperation, maritime, people-to-people exchanges, and space cooperation.

**Participation in Negotiations for the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity**

***IPEF Special Negotiating Round for Pillars II-IV: In-person Senior Officials' Meeting and Technical-level Negotiating Round, 8-11 February 2023, New Delhi, India***

The DFA in its capacity as Co-Chair of the Philippine negotiating team, participated in a Special Round of negotiations on Pillars II (Supply Chain), III (Clean Economy), and IV (Fair Economy) of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) in New Delhi, India to contribute substantively towards advancing Philippine interests and positions in the negotiations of the draft texts of the abovementioned Pillars.

***IPEF 2nd Negotiating Round for Pillars I-IV and Related Meetings: In-person Senior Officials' Meeting and Technical-level Negotiating Round, 14-26 March 2023, Bali, Indonesia***

The DFA, along with other representatives from the inter-agency mechanism, joined the IPEF 2nd Negotiating Round for Pillars I-IV in Bali, Indonesia to discuss draft negotiating texts, which have been tabled in all Pillars (with the exception of competition policy) and in all Pillar I (Trade) chapters, including new zero drafts of the digital trade, inclusivity, technical assistance and economic cooperation, labor, and environment chapters.

***IPEF 3rd Negotiating Round for Pillars I-IV and Related Meetings: In-person Senior Officials' Meeting and Technical-level Negotiating Round, 08-15 May 2023, Singapore***

The DFA, as co-chair of the Philippines' inter-agency mechanism with DTI, attended the IPEF 3rd Negotiating Round for Pillars I-IV in Singapore, to conduct in-depth discussions with IPEF partners where they continued to make strong progress on a



wide range of issues across the four pillars.

***IPEF Ministerial Meeting, 27 May 2023, Detroit, Michigan***



*DTI Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual (not in photo), assisted by DTI Assistant Secretary Allan B. Gepty and BOI Executive Director Ma. Corazon Halili-Dichosa, and Undersecretary Sorreta led members of the DFA UMAIER and DTI-BITR delegation to IPEF (Photo courtesy of APEC National Secretariat)*

The Philippine delegation led by DTI Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual and Philippines' APEC Senior Official and Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Carlos D. Sorreta participated in the IPEF Ministerial Meeting and Chief Negotiators' Meeting held on 26-27 May 2023 in Detroit, Michigan, USA. The meetings were chaired by US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo. All IPEF Member Parties participated.

Upon the conclusion of the meetings, IPEF Parties launched a Statement on the Substantial Conclusion of IPEF Supply Chain Agreement Negotiations. This agreement aims to provide a framework to build their collective understanding of significant supply chain risks, improve crisis coordination and response to supply chain disruptions, ensure that workers and the businesses, especially MSMEs, in the economies of IPEF partners benefit from resilient, robust, and efficient supply chains, better prepare businesses in the economies of the IPEF partners to identify, manage, and resolve supply chain bottlenecks, facilitate cooperation, mobilize investments, and promote regulatory transparency in sectors and goods critical to national security, public health and safety, or the prevention of significant or widespread economic disruptions, among many others. Discussions during the Ministerial Meeting focused around how to implement the agreement to create prosperous outcomes for the Indo-Pacific region.

Parties also issued a Joint Statement for the Trade Pillar, Clean Economy Pillar, and Fair Economy Pillar which outlines the ambitions, objectives, and progress of negotiations in the remaining IPEF Pillars, as well as directions moving forward.

***IPEF Virtual Ministerial Meeting, 30 June 2023***

The DFA, as co-lead of the Philippines' inter-agency mechanism, virtually participated at the IPEF Virtual Ministerial Meeting, chaired by US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, where IPEF partners reaffirmed their shared commitment to ambitious outcomes in Pillars III (Clean Economy) and IV (Fair Economy) and discussed the importance of delivering concrete benefits, including technical assistance and capacity building to support future implementation of the high standard commitments envisioned under the two pillars.

***IPEF 4th Negotiating Round for Pillars I-IV and Related Meetings: In-person Senior Officials' Meeting and Technical-level Negotiating Round, 09-15 July 2023, Busan, South Korea***

The DFA, as co-lead of the Philippines' inter-agency mechanism, participated at the IPEF 4th Negotiating Round for Pillars I-IV and Related Meetings. Substantial progress has been made in all Pillars II-IV, and in all sections of Pillar I Trade. In particular, the legal scrub for Pillar II Supply Chains following its launch and press in Detroit on 28 May 2023 has been advanced, while Pillar II is expected to be completed and, depending on domestic circumstances of all parties, simultaneously published.

***IPEF 5th Negotiating Round for Pillars I-IV and Related Meetings: In-person Senior Officials' Meeting and Technical-level Negotiating Round, 10-16 September 2023, Bangkok, Thailand***



*Philippine Delegation to the 5th Round of IPEF Negotiations*

Representatives from the DFA together with representatives from other agencies, joined the 5th



round of negotiations for the IPEF on 10-16 September in Bangkok, Thailand. IPEF discussions are focused on the pillars of (1) Trade, (2) Supply Chains, (3) Clean Economy, Decarbonization, and Infrastructure, and (4) Tax and Anti-Corruption. Through the work done in the four pillars of IPEF, the framework seeks to advance resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness for members.

***IPEF 6th Negotiating Round for Pillars I-IV and Related Meetings: In-person Senior Officials' Meeting and Technical-level Negotiating Round, 15-24 October 2023 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia***

Representatives from the DFA together with representatives from various other agencies joined the IPEF 6th Negotiating Round in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to continue making progress on negotiations towards high-standard outcomes under Pillars I, III, and IV, including continued discussions on next steps for the proposed IPEF Supply Chain Agreement (Pillar II) following substantial conclusion of negotiations in May and public release of the text in September 2023.

***IPEF 7th Negotiating Round for Pillars I-IV and Related Meetings: In-person Senior Officials' Meeting and Technical-level Negotiating Round, 05-16 November 2023, San Francisco, California, USA***

The DFA, in its capacity as Co-Chair of the Philippine negotiating team, joined the IPEF 7th Negotiating Round in San Francisco, California to continue negotiations on chapters under Pillar I such as Inclusivity, Trade Facilitation, Services Domestic Regulation, Labor, Environment, Digital Trade, Good Regulatory Practices, Agriculture, and Competition Policy. For Pillars III and IV, placeholders are included to discuss the Pillar Statements and any other remaining issues.

***OECD Southeast Asia Ministerial Forum, 26-27 October 2023, Hanoi, Vietnam***

The Philippines, led by Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Charles C. Jose, joined the members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), some ASEAN Member States, OECD Council and Secretariat, international organizations, OECD Business Network and high-

level representatives of the business sector at the OECD Southeast Asia Ministerial Forum on 26-27 October 2023 at the Melia Hotel, Hanoi, Vietnam.



*Undersecretary Jose delivering interventions during the Second Session of the OECD Ministerial Forum*

In his intervention on “Financing the Renewable Energy Transition”, Undersecretary Jose underscored the importance of science and innovation, and evidence-based decision-making and evaluation, ensuring just, inclusive, and accountable renewable energy transition through public-private partnership and stakeholder collaboration including in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) programs, and leveraging economic and technical cooperation to advance equitable development within and across economies.

Philippine Ambassador to Viet Nam Meynardo LB Montealegre also participated in the forum and introduced the Philippine delegation to Vietnamese officials and OECD organizers.

The overall theme of the OECD Ministerial Meeting is Sustainable and Quality Investment: New Momentum for OECD-Southeast Asia Partnership.





## E. PUBLIC AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY EFFORTS

The Office of Public and Cultural Diplomacy (OPCD) continues its efforts to engage with the public for the development and enhancement of the Philippines' image and standing in the global community.

A major accomplishment for OPCD was the production of the DFA's Institutional Video, which features the work and legacy of the DFA as encapsulated by the Three Pillars of Philippine Foreign Policy: (1) the preservation and enhancement of national security, (2) the promotion and attainment of economic security, and (3) the promotion of interests and protection of the welfare of Overseas Filipinos. The DFA Institutional Video was launched during the celebration of DFA Day in Malacañang in July 2023.

In addition, a *Lupang Hinirang* video was produced for use by the Department and FSPs, in collaboration with the different offices and FSPs.

Executive Officer of the EON Group) leading the discussions, the forum focused on the importance of public relations in national development and the socio-economic well-being of the Philippines, how public relations complement the Department's thrust of disseminating positive images of the country's culture and society through public diplomacy, and how the lessons and best practices of the private sector in branding can be adapted by the government to further strengthen the nation-branding of the Philippines at both domestic and global levels.

Attendees to the forum included five (5) members of the Diplomatic Corps, seventy (70) from the DFA, seventeen (17) from other government agencies, media, academe, and private institutions, as well as hundreds who viewed the event's live stream - some of who joined the discussion and shared their thoughts and experiences in public diplomacy and nation branding.



Screen capture of the *Lupang Hinirang* video led by Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, with DFA officials

### Efforts to Propose Inter-Agency and Multi-Sectoral Efforts to Develop a Country Brand

In partnership with FSI, OPCD organized a Mabini Dialogue on "Building an Image, Building a Nation: The Vital Role of Public Diplomacy and Branding in National Development" on 21 September 2023. With public relations experts Mr. Harold Brian Geronimo (Vice President for Public Relations and Media Affairs of the Megaworld Corporation) and Mr. Junie Del Mundo (Chairman and Chief



PR Experts Harold Brian Geronimo and Junie Del Mundo engaged with the audience in lively discussions at the Mabini Dialogue on "Building an Image, Building a Nation: The Vital Role of Public Diplomacy and Branding in National Development"



Efforts to develop a roadmap that will enable the Department to effectively harness the country's soft power in pursuit of its foreign policy goals also commenced in 2023.

**Crafting of a DFA Soft Power Roadmap**

The Soft Power Roadmap, which will complement the DFA Strategic Plan, will lay out specific objectives and strategies, implementation steps, as well as a monitoring and evaluation plan for effectively harnessing Philippine Soft Power.

The OPCD, in collaboration with EON, as project consultant, conducted research and surveys of DFA Offices and FSPs, producing a Landscape Analysis Report on the current state and perceptions on Philippine Soft Power. This was followed by four (4) consultation workshops, each focusing on a specific pillar of Philippine Foreign Policy and gaining insights from both internal (within DFA) and external stakeholders (other government and private organizations). The workshops, conducted from October to December 2023, were attended by twenty-six (26) DFA officials and sixty-one (61) individuals representing thirty-four (34) agencies. Insights from the Landscape Analysis and the workshops will feed into the initial draft of the Soft Power Roadmap, which will be vetted by the DFA and relevant stakeholders in next stages of the project.



*Organizers and participants at the Soft Power Consultation Workshop on National Security - External Stakeholders, the third of four workshops aimed at gathering insights on the Soft Power of the Philippines from internal and external stakeholders*

**Strong Freedom of Information (FOI) System**

The DFA was recognized once again as one of the “Top Requested and Performing Agencies in the e-FOI Portal” at the FOI Awards 2023.

This Award, along with the other FOI Awards (FOI Champion Award in 2019 and 2020; FOI Champion 2nd Runner-up Award in the National Government Agency Category in 2021; Top Requested and

Performing Agencies in the e-FOI Portal in 2022) conferred on the Department, is a testament to its outstanding commitment to transparency, accountability, and the pursuit of the principles of freedom of information.



*The DFA bags citation as “Top Requested and Performing Agencies in the e-FOI Portal” in the FOI Awards 2023 (Photo below courtesy of FOI Philippines)*

Moreover, the Department has maintained 100% compliance in the implementation of the government's Freedom of Information Program from the start of its implementation in October 2016.

In 2023, the Department processed 267 FOI requests regarding consular matters, treaties entered into by the Philippines, and information on OFWs, among many others.

**Intensified Social Media Presence**

As the primary tool of the Department to communicate with clients who rely on accurate and timely information on their applications and



concerns, the DFA, through the Social Media and Client Feedback Support Team of the OPCD – effectively the Department’s first responders on cyberspace – responded to a total of 235,906 comments and messages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram throughout 2023. Most of these concerns were consular and ATN in nature. The DFA also delivered key messages through social media campaigns for women’s month, for the promotion of the Foreign Service Officer Examinations, Maritime and Archipelagic Nation Awareness Month and for the month of the OFW. In addition, OPCD implemented a social media campaign showcasing the anniversary of bilateral relations with all of the Philippines’ partners.

**Expansion of the Philippine Studies Program**

The Philippine Studies Program involves the establishment of academic programs and projects overseas that promote the country internationally, with funding provided by the Office of Senator Loren Legarda.

The Program has four (4) objectives:

1. To promote Philippine culture;
2. To propagate the Philippine Studies program across the globe;
3. To foster understanding and support for Philippine interests internationally; and
4. To strengthen the Philippine’s diplomatic and cultural ties with other countries.

During the 1st batch of its implementation, seven (7) universities were provided funding assistance. These were: Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB) (Germany), Humboldt University of Berlin (Germany), University of Hamburg (Germany), SOAS University of London (United Kingdom), The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) (Singapore), New York University (United States) Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain).

In its second batch in 2022, eight (8) universities were added, namely: Thammasat University (Thailand), University of Namur (Belgium), University of Michigan (United States), University of Hawaii-Manoa (United States), La Trobe University (Australia), Universidad Autonoma de Mexico (Mexico), Busan University of Foreign Studies (South Korea), and York University (Canada).

In 2023, the University of Applied Arts Vienna (Angewandte) (Austria), University of Alberta

(Canada), and Sciences Po (France) were added to the roster.



*Philippine Consul General Zaldy Patron in Calgary and Prof. Bill Flanagan, President and Vice Chancellor of UA pose for a photo after signing the Philippine Studies Donation Agreement*



*Philippine Ambassador to France Junever Mahilum-West and President Mathias Vicherat of Sciences Po sign the Philippine Studies Donation Agreement*



*Philippine Ambassador to Austria Evangelina Lourdes A. Bernas and Dr. Gerald Bast, Rector of the University of Applied Arts Vienna (Angewandte) during the signing ceremony of the Philippine Studies Program*

Under the Philippine Studies Program, university grantees have to implement various activities and projects aimed at the advancement of Philippine Studies abroad. These projects include, but are not limited to:

1. Series of lectures;
2. Enhance of Filipiniana collection;
3. Research and publication;
4. Institutionalization of Philippine Studies courses/subjects and/or degrees/majors; and,
5. Awards and grants.





### Updating of the Cultural Diplomacy Framework

The Cultural Diplomacy Framework is a conceptual framework that lays down the context of the DFA's distinct brand of cultural diplomacy and helps steer its execution process towards the achievement of Philippine foreign policy goals.

Through this document, FSPs are guided in establishing the following elements of a strategically crafted cultural diplomacy program: 1) bases and values that should orient the DFA's cultural diplomacy program; 2) classification of cultural promotion activities; and 3) target audience of cultural diplomacy. It also attempts to position the existing DFA infrastructure for cultural diplomacy in such a way that it will complement this exercise.

To make the Cultural Diplomacy Framework more attuned to the Department's goals and in preparation for the establishment of the Office for Cultural Diplomacy (OCD), the Framework has been updated to reflect the objectives in the DFA Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

### Conduct of Photography and Press Release Writing Workshops for DFA personnel

Participants from different offices of the DFA joined the Multimedia Workshop on Photography organized by OPCD on 06 October 2023 at the DFA Press Room.

Assistant Secretary for Public and Cultural Diplomacy Arvin de Leon encouraged the participants to enjoy while learning and expressed the hope that the workshop helps create more captivating stories told through photos that can be used by the Department in its pursuit of Public and Cultural Diplomacy.



Participants from the DFA Home Office and the organizers pose for a photo with resource speaker JB de Leon after the workshop

Photographer and creative director JB de Leon, along with professional photographers Duke Rodriguez and Emerson Leonor, served as resource persons in the day-long workshop instructing and guiding the participants through lectures and practical shooting exercises. Sessions included a lecture on Mastering Lighting Techniques and an introduction to lighting principles, and the art of directing and maximizing equipment.

### Panel Discussion and Exhibit on Senator Geronima Pecson for the National Women's Month Celebration, 10 March 2023



UNACOM Secretary General Ivan S. Henares moderates the open forum of the symposium with Ambassador Elizabeth Buensuceso, Ms. Heidi Mendoza and Mr. Jan Marlon S. De Vera (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

In celebration of National Women's Month, DFA, in collaboration with the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines (UNACOM) and the Provincial Government of Pangasinan, successfully organized the event "Legacies and Standpoints: Filipino Women in Multilateralism" on 10 March 2023 at the Carlos P. Romulo Library.

The kickoff program was a symposium highlighting the status and her-story of women in multilateralism. The symposium was graced by Foreign Affairs Adviser and former Permanent Representative to the ASEAN, Ambassador Elizabeth Buensuceso; Former UN Undersecretary General for Internal Oversight Services Heidi Mendoza; and Mr. Jan Marlon S. De Vera of the Cultural Affairs Division, Pangasinan Provincial Tourism and Cultural Affairs Office.

### "Laro, Sining at Imahinasyon" Interactive Learn and Play Experience, 11 October 2023, Museo Pambata

In celebration of Museum and Galleries Month 2023, DFA-OPCD, in collaboration with Museo





Pambata Foundation, Inc., organized an on-site event entitled “*Laro, Sining, at Imahinasyon: An Interactive Learn and Play Experience*” at Museo Pambata. Held every October, the theme for the 2023 Museum and Galleries Month is “*Exhibits and Reflections: Crafting Opportunities for the New World*”.



*DFA-OPCD with Museo Pambata Foundation Inc., DFA personnel and their children, as well as participants from Canossa-Tondo Children's Foundation, Inc. (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public and Cultural Diplomacy Gonarano B. Musor was joined by Museo Pambata Foundation Inc. Member of the Board of Trustees, Ms. Elizabeth Ann Chan-Parpan, Executive Director Albert Benjamin Torralba, and other DFA officers and staff in formally opening the event.

The children of DFA personnel as well as those from the Canossa-Tondo Children’s Foundation, Inc., together with their parents and/or guardians, embarked on a guided tour of Museo Pambata and its marvelous theme rooms: Pamayanan (Culture), Parian (Market), Karagatan (Sea), Habi (Weave), Himig (Music), and Kalikasan (Environment).

**“Pahina at Bukana” Book Fair, 28-29 November 2023**



*Assistant Secretary for Public and Cultural Diplomacy Arvin R. De Leon delivers his Opening Remarks during the Pahina at Bukana Book Fair Opening Program (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

The DFA, through OPCD, in collaboration with Savage Mind Bookshop, and with the assistance of Ateneo de Naga University Press and National Book Development Board (NBDB), successfully organized the “Pahina and Bukana Book Fair” on 28-29 November 2023, with the theme, “Sapinsaping Pahina, Samu’t Saring Bukana”. The Book Fair was a hybrid event in celebration of the National Book Month. The theme revolved around the elements of books as treasured and bounded pages containing manifold portals inviting readers to relish and enjoy the pleasure of the written words. The event provided diverse platforms and approaches, encompassing both digital and physical realms, to cultivate a profound understanding and admiration for contemporary Philippine writings.

The program featured talks by renowned Filipino authors who shared their respective journeys, inspirations, and the creative processes behind their works: Mr. Ian Alfonso, senior researcher of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) and author of “Dogs in Philippine History”; Dr. Genevieve Asenjo, poet, children story writer, and a novelist in three Philippine languages, as well as author of “Sa Gihapon, Palangga, ang Uran”; and Mr. Teddy Espela, poet, development worker and author of the poetry book “Broken Places”.

**Hosting of the 2nd Cultural Retooling Course, 20-25 November 2023, Baguio City**



*National Artist for Film Kidlat Tahimik tours the participants of the Cultural Retooling Course Year 2 in Ili-Likha Artist Village where he talks about filmmaking, Philippine history and indigenous cultures*

Thirty (30) cultural officers from various FSPs and personnel from the Home Office participated in the Cultural Retooling Course Year 2 held in Baguio City from 20 to 25 November 2023, conducted by DFA-OPCD, in partnership with the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP).



With the theme “Navigating the Cultural Landscape: Strategies for Sustainable Arts Diplomacy,” the Retooling Course equipped the participants with adequate knowledge and skills to efficiently and effectively conduct cultural diplomacy through various approaches in the planning and implementation of projects related to cultural heritage and the creative industry. The following subthemes ensured the participants’ holistic training in different aspects of cultural diplomacy: (1) Philippine Creative Industries; (2) Arts, Culture and Philippine History and Arts Programming and Production Management; (3) Project Development and Project Proposal Writing; (4) Project Curation and Designing a Space/Venue; and (5) Image Branding and Marketing.



## F. PURSUING AN INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY

### Filing of Diplomatic Protests Against Violations in the West Philippine Sea

The Department remained steadfast in the preservation of Philippine sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction in the West Philippine Sea. Upon coordination among the Office of the Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs, Office of Asian and Pacific Affairs, Maritime and Ocean Affairs Office, and Office of Treaties and Legal Affairs, the DFA filed a total of 66 protests against Chinese violations in the West Philippine Sea in 2023. Philippine protests were also delivered through the summoning of Chinese officials, in parallel with the Philippine Embassy in Beijing.

In 2023, the DFA engaged with Chinese counterparts through several exchanges and dialogue to seek diplomatic solutions to differences at sea. While tensions remain, these engagements became a way to explore innovative ways to manage differences and de-escalate maritime tensions.

### Engagements on Maritime Cooperation

#### **Hosting of the 178th Maritime Forum of the Maritime League, 24 January 2023**

The DFA, in collaboration with DENR and the Embassy of Denmark in the Philippines, hosted the 178th Maritime Forum of the Maritime League on 24 January 2023 to discuss (1) the Outcomes of the Deep Seabed Mining Consultations hosted by the MOAO last December 2022; (2) Sea Level Rise and Small Fishing Communities National Plan of Action on Marine Litter (NPOA); and (3) the Net Zero Emissions by 2050 Scenario (NZE).

In their presentations, MOAO Director Robert D. Quintin shared the outcomes of the Deep Seabed Mining Consultations organized by DFA-MOAO on 16 December 2022. Director Quintin discussed the next steps and strategies in relation to deep seabed mining for the Philippines.

DENR Assistant Secretary Michelle Angelica Go highlighted the global concerns on the Sea Level Rise and Small Fishing Communities National Plan of Action on Marine Litter (NPOA). In the presentation, Assistant Secretary Go stressed that sea-level rise due to climate change and land subsidence due to over-extraction of groundwater are the twin dangers that cause inundation which puts small fishing communities at risk, this requires comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach to address the sea-level rise and marine plastic pollution through the NPOA.

Danish Ambassador to the Philippines Franz-Michael Mellbin shared Denmark's advocacy, expertise and commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, particularly on the Net Zero Emissions 2050 Scenario. Ambassador Mellbin highlighted the importance of collective approach between the public and private sector to support initiatives to make the maritime industry more sustainable.

Held in virtual format, the 178th Maritime Forum was one of the most well-attended sessions, gathering over two-hundred sixty (260) participants, from thirty-three (33) foreign missions in the Philippines, six (6) of whom are represented by their Ambassadors, Philippine Foreign Service Posts all over the world, and partner agencies here in the Philippines.

The Maritime League Forum is held monthly under the auspices of the Maritime League, a non-profit foundation established in 1995 to advance the interests of the Philippine maritime sector, and promote maritime development and safety through better information, cooperation, and unity of effort among the stakeholders of the maritime industry. The DFA is traditionally the host of the first meeting of the year.

#### **5th Philippines-Japan Maritime Dialogue, 29 March 2023, Tokyo, Japan**

The Philippines and Japan held their 5th Maritime





Dialogue on 29 March 2023, in Tokyo, Japan, which covered key components of the two countries' active engagement in the field of maritime cooperation. The delegations exchanged views on issues of mutual interest; particularly the situation in vital waterways of the West Philippine Sea, Luzon Strait, Sulu-Celebes Seas, and the East China Sea; regional efforts to maintain peace and stability; and climate change.



*The Philippine and Japanese delegations to the 5th Philippines-Japan Maritime Dialogue*

The two countries stressed the importance of the rules-based international maritime order based on UNCLOS. The Philippines also thanked Japan for its public expressions of support for the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea.

On practical cooperation, Japan conveyed its continuing support for Philippine initiatives to enhance maritime domain awareness and combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, as well as other capacity-building projects.

The Philippines and Japan look forward to working together on preserving the marine environment, especially in relation to the recently-completed Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty and on crafting rules and regulations on deep seabed mining.

The delegations were led by Assistant Secretary for Maritime and Ocean Affairs Maria Angela Ponce, and Deputy Director General Hayashi Makoto of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Southeast and Southwest Asian Affairs Department.

**3rd Philippines-Australia Maritime Dialogue, 05 July 2023, Manila**

The Philippines hosted the 3rd Philippines-Australia Maritime Dialogue on 05 July 2022 in Manila.

Assistant Secretary for Maritime and Ocean Affairs Maria Angela A. Ponce, and First Assistant Secretary Dr. Peter Sawczak of the US and Indo-

Pacific Strategy Division of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade led their respective delegations for a deeper and more integrated bilateral cooperation and coordination on common interests in maritime affairs.



*Assistant Secretary Ponce shakes hand with Australian DFA First Assistant Secretary Dr. Peter Sawczak (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

Discussions focused on regional maritime threats and challenges, maritime safety and security cooperation, and marine environmental protection, with key Philippine maritime and security agencies participating in the Maritime Dialogue, across the table from their Australian counterparts. Both delegations also discussed defense cooperation, bilateral and regional maritime cooperation initiatives, other opportunities for close collaboration, and cooperation in international organizations.

A Track 1.5 Dialogue preceded the Maritime Dialogue with both the foreign ministries' partner institutions taking the lead, which are the UP Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea for the Philippines, and La Trobe Asia for Australia.

**2nd Philippines-Republic of Korea Maritime Dialogue, 12 October 2023, Manila**



*Philippine and Korean delegations during the 2nd Philippines-ROK Maritime Dialogue (Photos courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*



The Philippines and the Republic of Korea underscored their shared commitment to deepen maritime cooperation as the two countries' delegations met in Manila, for the second Philippines-ROK Maritime Dialogue, on 12 October 2023. The two sides acknowledged the importance of the oceans to their national interests as they seek to build on their already robust engagement in the field of maritime cooperation.

The Maritime Dialogue covered a broad range of topics, including ocean economy, marine environment, maritime security and safety, and regional and multilateral maritime-related developments.

The Head of the Philippine Delegation, Assistant Secretary for Maritime and Ocean Affairs Maria Angela Ponce noted that the PH-ROK Maritime Dialogue was an opportune occasion to reaffirm the two countries' commitment to the enhancement of their mutual engagement in the maritime domain ahead of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral relations in 2024. Assistant Secretary Ponce also took the opportunity to thank the ROK for citing the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea in its written submission to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea on the request for an advisory opinion related to climate change.

The ROK Delegation, for its part, said that the success of the Maritime Dialogue with the Philippines—its only maritime dialogue with ASEAN Member States—would serve as a model for the establishment of similar mechanisms with countries in the region in the future.

### **Affirmation of the Award on the South China Sea Arbitration (Arbitral Award)**

#### ***“Kasiguruhan sa Karagatan: Strengthening the Implementation of the South China Sea Arbitral Award” Maritime Forum***

The DFA spearheaded the conduct of a forum entitled “Kasiguruhan sa Karagatan: Strengthening the Implementation of the South China Sea Arbitral Award” which emphasized the importance of the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Award and the current efforts of the Department to implement it.

During the forum, Assistant Secretary for Maritime and Ocean Affairs Maria Angela A. Ponce stated that among the values of the Arbitral Award is its promotion and “protection of community interests that encompass fundamental values shared by the coastal states of the South China Sea and the international community as a whole”.

The forum also featured UP Institute for Maritime and Law of Sea Director Prof. Jay L. Batongbacal, DOJ Senior State Counsel Fretti G. Ganchoon, UP Visayas Professor Dr. Rosalie Hall, and General Emmanuel Bautista who spoke about the Philippines' gains from the Arbitral Award, role of the security sector in its enforcement, and current government efforts and legislative proposals to further strengthen its implementation.

The forum is organized in commemoration of the 7th Anniversary of the Arbitral Award by Amador Research Services as part of its Project Waypoints together with the UP Institute for Maritime and Law of Sea, and the Philippine Public Safety College.

### **Operationalizing the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**

#### ***Adoption UNCLOS Agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), 20 June 2023***



*Members of the Philippine delegation, led by Undersecretary Sorreta, pose following the adoption of the BBNJ Agreement under the UNCLOS (Photo courtesy of New York PM)*

The Philippines, led by the DFA, welcomed the historic adoption on 20 June 2023 of the UNCLOS agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).



The Agreement was adopted by consensus, with delegates erupting into applause following the adoption.

Consistent with the provisions of UNCLOS on protecting and preserving the marine environment, the Agreement recognizes the need to address biological diversity loss and degradation of ecosystems of the ocean in a coherent and cooperative manner. The Agreement also underscores the need for a comprehensive global regime, under UNCLOS, to better address conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond jurisdiction.

Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Carlos D. Sorreta, who led the Philippine delegation, delivered a statement following the adoption of the Agreement and commended the Conference President, Ambassador Rena Lee, for shepherding the process.

***Southeast Asian Regional Workshop on the BBNJ Agreement, 15-17 November 2023, Manila***



*Assistant Secretary Ponce and Acting Secretary Morales with UK Ambassador Laure Beaufils, and Australian Deputy Head of Mission Dr. Moya Elyn Collett, and Natural Resources Defense Council Director Lisa Speer*

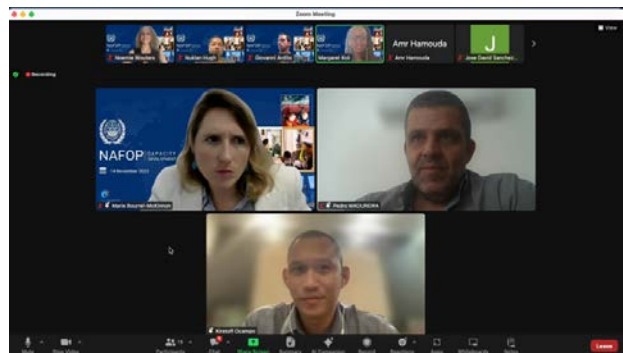
The DFA, in collaboration with the Australian Embassy, the British Embassy, the High Seas Alliance, the Natural Resources Defence Council, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS), hosted a Southeast Asian Regional Workshop on the BBNJ Agreement from 15-17 November 2023 in Manila, engaging the region's delegations that participated in the negotiation of the BBNJ.

The workshop was initiated by the Philippines to sustain the positive momentum from the historic adoption and opening for signature of the BBNJ

Agreement on 20 September 2023 at the UN Headquarters in New York. Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, signed for the Philippines. To date, 82 States and the EU have signed the Agreement.

BBNJ experts provided the workshop participants an overview of the BBNJ Agreement, its importance to the marine environment, and benefits of conserving marine biodiversity. Participants included representatives from foreign ministries, fisheries, environment, science and technology ministries, legislature/parliament, civil society, and the academe.

***3rd Annual Meeting of the National Focal Points in charge of liaising with the International Seabed Authority Secretariat, 20 November 2023***



*DFA-MOAO Principal Assistant Kirstoff Ocampo, ISA National Focal Point for Capacity Development, shares the recent collaboration between the Philippines and ISA during the 3rd Annual meeting of the National Focal Points in charge of liaising with the ISA Secretariat*

The DFA-MOAO, represented by Mr. Kirstoff Ocampo, the Philippine Focal for Capacity Development, joined the 3rd Annual meeting of the National Focal Points (NAFOPs) in charge of liaising with the ISA Secretariat on matters relating to capacity development (ISA-NAFOP-CD) on 14 November 2023. The meeting was held via videoconference.

Mr. Ocampo reported on the capacity development collaborations between the Philippines and ISA, and conveyed the country's appreciation in particular on the ISA-Philippines national capacity development workshop on deep-sea related matters held from 09-11 October 2023 in Manila, which brought together a diverse group of government officials, experts, academics, civil society and industry representatives to explore and





discuss critical topics related to deep-sea exploration and mining, facilitating a discussion with the ISA from a developing country perspective with a focus on the specific Philippine interests.

**Lecture on the Independent Foreign Policy of the Philippines, 20 November 2023, Metropolitan University Prague, Czech Republic**



Philippine Ambassador to the Czech Republic Eduardo Martin R. Meñez and Undersecretary Lazaro with the students and faculty of MUP

The Metropolitan University Prague (MUP), in coordination with the Philippine Embassy in Prague, hosted a lecture by Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro on the topic of “Independent Foreign Policy of the Philippines”.

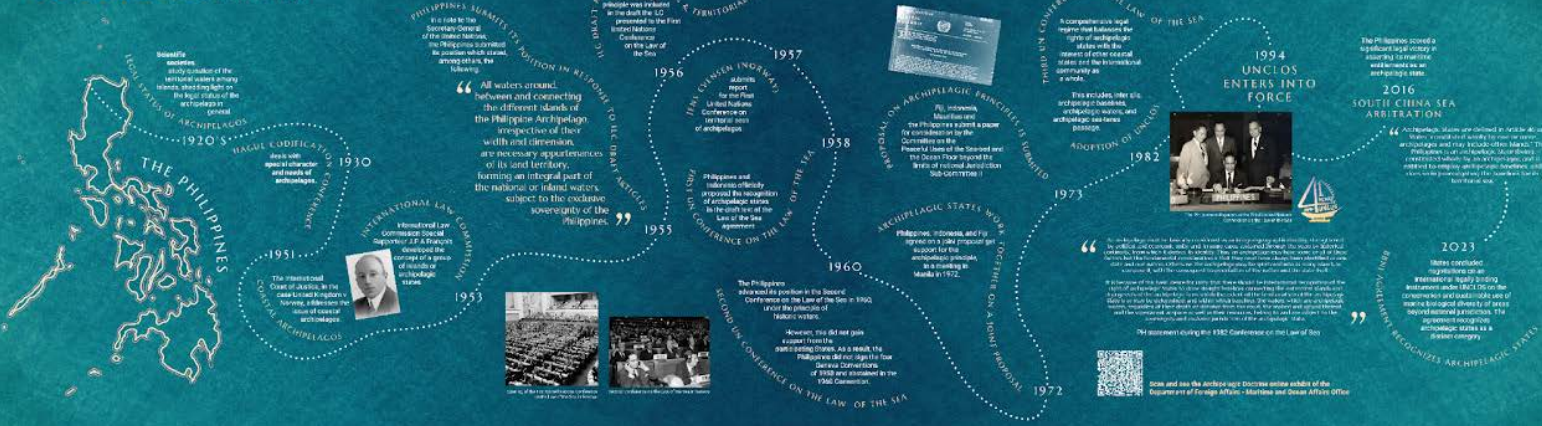
Around 130 undergraduate and graduate students taking up International and Asian studies attended the lecture. Former Czech Ambassador to the Philippines Jana Sediva was also in attendance.

The lecture delved into the constitutional foundations of the Philippines' pursuit of an independent foreign policy. Particular focus was placed on the legal battle for the West Philippine Sea, underscoring the Philippines' commitment to defending its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, firmly anchored on UNCLOS and the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea. The lecture also touched upon the Philippines' engagement with its international partners, particularly in upholding the rules-based international order.

**Maritime and Archipelagic Nation Awareness Month (MANAMo) 2023, September 2023**

With the DFA's sub-theme, “Setting Sails Towards Sustainability: Ocean Science for Archipelagic Philippines”, the DFA, in cooperation with UNACOM, kicked off the Maritime and Archipelagic Nation Awareness Month (MANAMo) 2023 with an exhibit titled “Archipelagic States: Identity, Consciousness and Law”. The exhibit explored the historical, cultural, and legal dimensions of the Philippines as an archipelagic state.

**ARCHIPELAGIC STATES** IDENTITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND LAW





**Orientation for Government Executives on the Communist Terrorist Group (CTG), 08 June 2023 and July 2023**



*Virtual Orientation for FSPs in Africa and Europe on CTG Problem, 07 July 2023*

The orientation was co-organized by the Department, as head of the International Engagement Cluster, and NICA, as head of the Situational Awareness and Knowledge Management (SAKM) Cluster to update the Home Office, and FSPs on the activities of the CTG in the international arena, and the Philippine government's efforts in combating the CTGs' financing schemes.

**Virtual Forum on “Strengthening Cooperation Mechanism for the Protection of the Civil Society Organization/Non-Profit Organization Sector from Exploitation for Purposes of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing”, 24 August 2023**

The Department, together with Association of Foundations, CODE-NGO, the League of Corporate Foundations, the Philippine Business for Social Progress, and the Philippine Council for NGO Certification, co-organized a virtual forum on “Strengthening Cooperation Mechanism for the Protection of the Civil Society Organization/Non-Profit Organization Sector from Exploitation for Purposes of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing.” This forum brought together the diplomatic missions, the UN and international organizations, aid and development agencies in the Philippines, relevant government institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector to raise their awareness on the NPOs' vulnerability to terrorism financing and money laundering exploitation, as well as the efforts of the government and the private sector to safeguard the civic space against such risks.





## G. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE INITIATIVES

### Philippines-UN Partnership on Disaster Risk Management and International Humanitarian Assistance



Undersecretary Domingo with UN Resident Coordinator Gustavo Gonzales and the UN OCHA representatives  
(Photo courtesy of DFA-OUCSCA)

Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo and UN Resident Coordinator Gustavo Gonzales met on 09 January 2023 at the DFA to discuss ways to strengthen the ties between the Philippine Government and the UN System, together with the UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), specifically in the area of disaster risk management and international humanitarian assistance.

### Philippine-led Humanitarian Assistance to Other Countries

#### **Voluntary Contributions to Countries in Crises**

The Philippines provided the following voluntary financial contributions in solidarity with countries in crises:

- USD 20,000 humanitarian assistance for Sudan;
- USD 25,000.00 for the Humanitarian Response Plan - Ukraine via United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Joint Launch;
- USD 25,000.00 for the Regional Refugee Response Plan;
- USD 100,000.00 for the Yemen Humanitarian Fund - Yemen via UN OCHA;

- USD 10,000.00 for Nauru's COVID-19 Management Program;
- USD 100,000.00 for the Flood Relief and Rehabilitation Efforts - Pakistan via the United Nations World Food Programme;
- USD 50,000.00 for the UN Flash Appeal for the Drought Response in Kenya;
- USD 100,000.00 financial aid to Syria for its earthquake rehabilitation efforts;
- USD 100,000.00 for the Maui Strong Fund of the Hawaii Community Foundation;
- USD 200,000.00 financial support for over 700 Filipino and Filipino-American casualties of the Maui wildfire as welfare assistance and to help defray consular fees.

#### **Deployment of Inter-Agency Disaster Response Team to Türkiye and Northern Syria following 7.8-magnitude Earthquake**

The DFA, as lead agency of the Philippine International Humanitarian Assistance Cluster (PIHAC) of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), in coordination with the DND-Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and the DOH, facilitated the deployment of an interagency disaster response team following a massive 7.8-magnitude earthquake that struck Türkiye and northern Syria on 06 February 2023. The Philippine Inter-Agency Humanitarian Contingent (PIAHC) is composed of 82 personnel from the DND-OCD, DOH, 505th Search and Rescue Group (SRG) of the Philippine Air Force, 525th Engineer Combat Battalion (ECBn) of the Philippine Army, Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), and Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA).

The Philippine deployment was in solidarity with Türkiye, which has greatly contributed to the peace efforts in Mindanao and COVID-19 response. A total of 36 buildings were assessed by the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team and 36 patients were accommodated by the Philippine Emergency Medical Assistance Team (PEMAT). The in-kind donation, amounting to PhP 3.4 million, was provided by DND-OCD to the affected families in





the Republic of Türkiye. The donation included 11,205 pieces of blankets, 5,000 pieces of bonnets, and 420 pairs of gloves.

### **Facilitation of International Humanitarian Assistance (IHA) in Mindoro Oil spill and Tropical Cyclone Egay**

The DFA-Office of Civilian Security has taken the lead in consolidating, monitoring, and processing of international humanitarian assistance for the Philippine Government, most notably on IHA related to the oil spill incident in Mindoro and its surrounding areas and the Tropical Cyclone (TC) Egay.

### **Briefing on “The Big One” for the Diplomatic Corps in Makati City, 13 December 2023**



*Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo and Assistant Secretary for Civilian Security Alan L. Deniega with representatives of the Makati City DRRMO and DND-OCD during the Briefing on “The Big One” for the Diplomatic Corps*

In preparation for “The Big One”, a major earthquake that is predicted to hit Metro Manila in the future, the DFA hosted a briefing on 13 December 2023 for embassies and international organizations located in Makati City. The event was attended by 49 representatives representing 35 Embassies, and four International Organizations. The briefings were conducted by the Makati City government and the DND-Office of Civil Defense (OCD). The briefing discussed the technical aspects of earthquake preparedness, and provided information on hazard, vulnerability, risk assessment, and preparations being made by the Makati City government, particularly its Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (DRRMO).



## ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOME 2

# Overseas Filipinos Protected and Engaged, and Consular Services Improved





## A. ENSURING THE WELFARE OF OVERSEAS FILIPINOS

The DFA, through UMWA, in accordance with its mandate, continued providing ATN services to distressed overseas Filipinos. The latter included OFWs, in view of the need for the DMW to set up its capabilities for ATN services.

To enable the continued ATN services for OFWs, the DFA, as requested by the DMW, signed a Joint Memorandum with the DMW on 01 February 2023 for this very purpose. The DFA-DMW Joint Circular No. 1, series of 2023, also enabled the DFA to fund the ATN services, as well as the legal assistance services, for distressed OFWs until the end of March 2023. However, as the latter date approached, the DMW requested the DFA for an extension, until the end of June 2023, of this arrangement through DFA-DMW Joint Circular No. 2, series of 2023.

Thus, for the first six (6) months of 2023, the DFA provided all the ATN services to all types of distressed overseas Filipinos. While not all ATN cases require the use of these funds, there were still thousands of distressed overseas Filipinos who became beneficiaries in 2023. There were 4,811 beneficiaries of repatriation assistance; 7,588 beneficiaries of various types of welfare assistance (i.e., care packages, temporary shelter, financial assistance), with 17 next-of-kin who were provided assistance for their compassionate visit to their distressed Filipino relatives overseas who were either medically confined or detained for various offenses or serving sentence. There were 342 beneficiaries of medical assistance (payment of medicines and hospital bills) and 72 beneficiaries of medical repatriation, which were coordinated with hospitals and medical escorts. There were also 1,084 beneficiaries of shelters recognized by the host governments for distressed Filipino migrants. In addition, Posts financed the shipment of the remains of 204 deceased overseas Filipinos.

Through its support for the consular outreach activities of FSPs using the ATN Fund, around 21,683 overseas Filipinos, who lived far from where the Philippine Embassies and Consulates are

located, were able to avail of consular services. Many of these were passport renewal services, which also enabled them to renew their visas and maintain their legal residency in the receiving countries.

Included in the ATN services to Filipinos is legal assistance, of which 2,310 overseas Filipinos were beneficiaries. Through various means of intercession and disbursements from the Legal Assistance Fund (LAF), the legal assistance for overseas Filipinos with legal cases abroad, provided by Posts through their retained lawyers, resulted in delays of execution of two (2) death row cases, four (4) pardons (two of death row cases), around 23 dismissal of cases, 25 acquittals, and at least one (1) case with reduced or downgraded sentence in 2023.

Another service still provided by the DFA are the payments of the End-of-Service Benefits (ESBs) and blood money claims of 314 deceased OFWs to their legal heirs in 2023. DFA-UMWA is preparing to turn over these functions to the DMW in 2024.

### Repatriation of Overseas Filipinos from Areas of Conflict or Disaster

#### *Repatriation of Filipinos affected by the Earthquake in Türkiye*



*Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo welcomed one of the first batch of repatriates from Gaza together on 11 November 2023 (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

The DFA, through UMWA and the Philippine Embassy in Ankara, repatriated 87 overseas Filipinos affected by the earthquake in Türkiye. In





addition to the facilitation of the repatriation of Filipinos, the Embassy also provided housing, food and necessities, as well as assisted in liaising with the Turkish government and various non-government organizations for aid in rebuilding the homes and livelihood of Filipinos who wish to stay in Türkiye.

**Evacuation and Repatriation of Filipinos from Sudan**



*The Rapid Response Team from DFA-UMWA at the airport in Cairo with the last batch of Filipino repatriates from Sudan (Photo courtesy of DFA-UMWA)*



*Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo meets the repatriates who fled the conflict in Sudan (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

More than 800 overseas Filipinos were safely evacuated from Sudan with the combined efforts of the DFA, the Philippine Embassies in Cairo, Riyadh, and Athens, and the Philippine Consulate General in Jeddah. The DFA sent a Rapid Response Team (RRT) to augment the ATN team from Cairo PE at the Egypt-Sudan border who were assisting the Filipinos fleeing the conflict, bringing them by buses to Cairo for temporary shelter and eventual repatriation. The Philippine Consulate General in Jeddah also sent an RRT to Port Sudan to help Filipinos stranded there reach the Philippines through Saudi Arabia, and its ATN team also assisted the Filipinos arriving in Jeddah .

Of the 609 Filipinos who availed of repatriation assistance, more than 297 overseas Filipinos were repatriated by the DFA, and the others through the

DMW and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). The Philippines coordinated with the governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Greece the safe passage of these evacuees.

**Evacuation and Repatriation of Filipinos following the Gaza Crisis**



*Philippine Ambassador to Egypt Ezzedin H. Tago and Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega meet the evacuees from the Gaza Strip in Cairo, Egypt (Photo courtesy of Cairo PE)*



*Secretary Manalo welcoming one of the first batch of repatriates from Gaza together on 11 November 2023 (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

The DFA, through UMWA and the Philippine Embassies in Tel Aviv (Israel), Amman (Jordan) and Cairo (Egypt), has been at the forefront of response actions to assist Filipinos affected by the crisis in the Levant. The Philippine Embassy in Jordan kept in touch with the Filipinos in the Gaza Strip for crucial information on movements and evacuation. The Philippine Embassies in Tel Aviv and Cairo coordinated with the authorities in Israel and Egypt for the exit clearance of the Filipinos and their Palestinian family members for exit through the Rafah Border to Egypt. The Philippine Embassy in Cairo brought the evacuees by buses to Cairo where they were temporarily sheltered and their repatriation flights to the Philippines booked. The Philippine Embassy in Cairo also coordinated with



the IOM for the documentation and repatriation of the Palestinian family members of the Filipino evacuees. By the end of 2023, a total of 122 Filipinos have been evacuated from Gaza, but only 118 chose to be repatriated, as a Filipino mother of two (2) decided to stay in Egypt with her Egyptian husband and her Filipino mother. Most of the Filipinos who stayed on in the Gaza Strip refused to evacuate without their Palestinian family members who were still awaiting clearance from Israeli and Egyptian authorities.

The Philippine Embassy in Beirut also started repatriating Filipinos who chose voluntary repatriation when conflict affected southern Lebanon. Around 35 Filipinos were repatriated with their Lebanese family members, while around 20 OFWs were also repatriated by the Migrant Workers' Office (MWO) in Beirut. The MWO in Tel Aviv also repatriated around 446 OFWs and their dependents.

### **Consular Mission and Repatriation of Filipinos from Yemen**



*The 19 Filipino repatriates from Yemen with the Rapid Response Team (RRT) and representatives of the DFA-UMWA and OWWA who met them in Manila (Photo courtesy of DFA-UMWA)*

In response to requests from Filipinos in Yemen for assistance to return to the Philippines, DFA-UMWA sent an RRT to Yemen. Together with personnel from the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh and Philippine Honorary Consul Mohamad Saleh Al Jamal, the RRT successfully brought home 19 overseas Filipinos who were all from the Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

### **Repatriation of Filipinos in Northeastern Syrian Camps**

The Department has convened a series of inter-office/agency meetings on the repatriation of reported Filipinos in the Northeast Syrian Camps.

The initial inter-agency coordination meeting was held on 30 March 2023, wherein the body discussed updates on the situation of reported Filipino nationals in Northeastern Syrian camps. The meeting underscored the urgency of repatriating the Filipino dependents and the importance of concerted efforts to ensure that responsive rehabilitation and reintegration programs are in place for the subject Filipinos who are allegedly linked/associated with and/or are victims of terrorism.

### **Assistance-to-Nationals Missions**

As part of the efforts to promote the rights and protect the welfare of overseas Filipinos, with a view to assessing and enhancing the capabilities of FSPs for assistance to nationals (ATN), especially in view of the then-pending, then actual, turnover of ATN services for OFWs to the DMW, DFA-UMWA embarked on several ATN Missions, which included the ATN audit of Posts. To maximize the travels, these missions and audits were usually combined with other consular outreach and mapping activities, trainings, conferences, meetings and rapid response teams (RRTs). ATN Missions also include meetings with the Filipino community, meetings and courtesy calls on host government officials, and hospital visits to medically confined overseas Filipinos, and jail visits to detained overseas Filipinos, and repatriations.

- Spain (Madrid and Barcelona), 06-10 February 2023;
- Türkiye (Ankara), 03-08 March 2023;
- Uzbekistan (Tashkent), 11-13 March 2023;
- Iran (Tehran), 16-17 March 2023;
- Canada (Toronto), 03-06 June 2023;
- Myanmar (Yangon), 30 June - 02 July 2023, 30 October - 02 November 2023;
- Cambodia (Pnomh Penh), 02-05 November 2023;
- USA (New York and Pennsylvania), 21-22 July 2023;
- Thailand (Bangkok), 22-23 August 2023;
- United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai), 30 August - 1 September 2023;
- Mexico, 04-09 September 2023;
- USA (Los Angeles), 16-18 September 2023;
- Italy (Rome and Milan), 30 September - 01 October 2023;
- Switzerland (Geneva and Berne), 02-08 October 2023;



- Egypt (Cairo), 11-14 November 2023;
- Israel (Tel Aviv), 15-19 November 2023;
- Kuwait, 06-07 December 2023;
- Vietnam (Hanoi), 25-26 October 2023;
- Laos (Vientiane), 27-29 October 2023;
- China (Xiamen, Shanghai), 10-16 December 2023;
- China (Macau and Guangzhou), 14-20 December 2023; and
- South Korea (Seoul), 20-23 December 2023.

### **Bilateral Engagements on Overseas Filipinos**

The Department also sought bilateral meetings with key government officials in the effort to bring host government assistance to distressed overseas Filipinos.

#### ***Meetings with Turkish Officials for overseas Filipinos affected by the Earthquakes in Türkiye, 06 March 2023***

Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega met with Turkish officials to inquire on the assistance provided by the Turkish government to Filipino migrants who were affected by the earthquake that hit the southeastern provinces of Türkiye on 06 February 2023 and the aftershocks that followed.



*Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Deputy Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs Yasin Ekrem Serim,, and the Philippine delegation, with Undersecretary de Vega and Philippine Ambassador to Türkiye Maria Elena P. Algabre (Photo courtesy of Ankara PE)*

Deputy Foreign Minister Yasin Ekrem Serim thanked the Philippines for sending aid in the form of medical supplies and an 85-member Inter-Agency Humanitarian Contingent. He assured the Undersecretary that plans are underway for assisting the earthquake survivors.



*The Philippine delegation, led by Undersecretary de Vega, with President Dr. Savaş Ünlü of the Presidency of Migration Management, Ministry of Interior and his team (Photo courtesy of Ankara PE)*

Dr. Savaş Ünlü of the Ministry of Interior confirmed that, among the earthquake survivors, Filipino migrants who have acquired Turkish citizenship will be eligible to receive financial and housing aid from the Turkish government.

#### ***Meetings with Egyptian Officials on the Evacuation and Repatriation of Filipinos in the Gaza Strip, 11-19 November 2023***

During the ATN Mission and RRT in Egypt and Israel, a critical portion of the Mission was the meetings of Undersecretary de Vega with top-level government officials in Cairo and Tel-Aviv to hand deliver Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo's letters of gratitude for his Egyptian and Israeli counterparts. The meetings, which provided a platform for discussions on matters of mutual interest, also allowed Undersecretary de Vega to express the Philippines' concerns and appeal for the release of Filipinos taken captive by Hamas during its 07 October 2023 attacks. These hostages were eventually released within the year.



*Undersecretary de Vega, accompanied by the respective Philippine Ambassadors to Egypt and Israel, meets counterparts at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry in Cairo (top) and Israeli Foreign Ministry in Tel-Aviv (bottom)*





### **Meeting with Guangzhou and Macau Authorities, December 2023**



*Undersecretary de Vega with Deputy Director General Li Hongzhi of the Guangdong Province Foreign Office*

In his meeting with Chinese authorities, Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega discussed the productive bilateral collaboration that continues on very important consular areas of mutual concern such as addressing trafficking in persons and illegal workers, as well as the fight against illicit drugs.

Undersecretary de Vega also met with Filipino community groups in both cities to brief them about the DFA's assistance-to-nationals work and assured them of the government's continued support for their welfare. He also conveyed to them the Chinese authorities' deep appreciation for the positive contributions of the thousands of Filipinos in China to that country's economic development.

### **Combating Trafficking in Persons**

#### **Rescue of Filipino Trafficking Victims from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos**



*DFA-UMWA, led by Undersecretary de Vega, assisting Filipino human trafficking victims from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos*

From the last couple of months of 2022 until the end of 2023, UMWA, in coordination with the Philippine Embassies in Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos assisted Filipino human trafficking victims (HTVs) to leave their abusive employers who lured them to Myanmar with promises of clerical jobs in any of the three countries.

The HTVs were being forced by Chinese syndicates operating in the remote areas of Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, to victimize vulnerable persons through cyberscamming, called "pig slaughtering," i.e., luring the victims to invest in fake cryptocurrency platforms through various schemes such as love scams. Unfortunately, when the HTVs are unable to meet their quota of scamming victims or amount illegally obtained funds, they were subjected to corporal punishments ranging from being starved, being beaten up, being subjected to electric shocks, to having their genitals mutilated. The HTVs would also not be released from their slave-like employment unless they "reimbursed" the employers for their hiring expenses (airfare, local transportation, visa fees, board and lodgings), despite having been themselves lured by "all-expenses paid" job offers on social media.

The DFA assisted and repatriated around 137 HTVs from these countries in 2023.

#### ***Tier 1 Status in the US 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report for the Eighth Consecutive Year***

On 15 June 2023, the US Department of State issued its 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, which included the Philippines among the Tier 1 countries for the 8th consecutive year.

While Tier 1 ranking does not mean that human trafficking is absent in a country or that it is doing enough to address the problem, it indicates that, from the point of view of the US, a country or its government has made efforts to address the problem, meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking under the US' Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, as amended (TVPA). Maintaining the Tier 1 ranking also means that the Philippines has demonstrated appreciable progress in combating trafficking.

#### ***Philippine Co-Chairship of High-Level Dialogue (HLD) to Address Transnational Crime and Human Trafficking Associated with Casinos and***

## Scam Operations, 10 July 2023, Bangkok, Thailand



DOJ Assistant Secretary Francis John L. Tejano, Undersecretary de Vega (Co-Chair, DFA UMWA), Mr. Jeremy Douglas (Co-Chair, UNODC) and Dr. Rebecca Miller (UNODC) during the High-Level Dialogue (HLD) to Address Transnational Crime and Human Trafficking Associated with Casinos and Scam Operations

The DFA-UMWA co-chaired the High-Level Dialogue (HLD) to Address Transnational Crime and Human Trafficking Associated with Casinos and Scam Operations, organized by the UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific (ROSEAP) and held on 10 July 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The HLD, attended by all ASEAN countries plus China, aimed to discuss the emerging trend on human trafficking and people smuggling linked to organized transnational criminality. These are facilitated by highly organized criminal groups who are engaged in money laundering, corruption, cyber-enabled crimes, kidnapping, extortion, and torture.

The Philippine delegation was composed of officials from the DFA, DOJ, BI, and DMW. Speaking as Co-Chair of the Dialogue, Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. de Vega thanked all delegations present for their insights into the necessary measures that need to be taken jointly by all nations in the region, consistent with the spirit of cooperation expressed by ASEAN Leaders when they issued the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Combating Trafficking in Persons Caused by the Abuse of Technology during the ASEAN Summit in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia held in May 2023.

## Sub-Regional Consultation Meeting on Human Trafficking in Mainland Southeast Asia, 23-24 December 2023, Hanoi, Vietnam

DFA-UMWA also organized a consultation meeting for the Philippine Embassies in Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam to enhance

coordination among the Posts on the continuing phenomenon of Filipinos who were trafficked to the CLMV countries.

## Bali Process Meetings

As part of its commitment against trafficking in persons and people smuggling in the Asia-Pacific, the DFA attended the meetings of the Bali Process at various levels of representation.

- [8th Bali Process Ministerial Conference, 08-10 February 2023, Adelaide, Australia.](#)



Philippine Ambassador to Australia Helen B. dela Vega delivers the Philippine intervention during the 8th Bali Process Ministerial Conference

- [Bali Process Joint Plan of Action Planning Session 2023-2024, 25-28 July 2023, Bangkok, Thailand.](#) Organized by Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO) and co-chaired by New Zealand and Vietnam, the Philippines was represented by DFA-OMWA Director Querobine D. Laccay and Atty. Paulene Kaye Bucag-Lopez of the DOJ-Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT).
- [2023 Constructive Dialogue on Irregular Migration, Trafficking in Persons, People Smuggling, and Related Transnational Crime, 10-11 October 2023, Bangkok, Thailand.](#) Organized by the RSO, the Philippines was represented by Assistant Secretary Jose Dominic F. Clavano IV of DOJ-IACAT and DFA-UMWA Senior Administrative Assistant Yasmine P. Moterey.
- [Regional Roundtable on Strengthening Cooperation to Prevent Trafficking in Persons Caused by the Abuse of Technology - 29 August 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia.](#) Organized by the RSO, the Philippines was represented by DOJ Undersecretary Nicholas Felix L. Ty of DOJ-IACAT, DFA-OMWA Director Querobine



D. Laccay, and DFA-OMWA ATN Desk Officer Patricia Ancheta.

- [Border Forum 2023: Multilateral Information Sharing, 06-07 December 2023, Bangkok, Thailand.](#) Organized by the RSO, the Philippines was represented by DFA-OMWA Director Querobine D. Laccay and DFA-OMWA staff Valerie F. Agnote.

In addition, the DFA also supported the DOJ-IACAT's holding of the 9th Manila International Dialogue (MID) on Human Trafficking in Manila on 13 December 2023.

### ***Meetings of the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT)***

DFA-UMWA represents the DFA as one of the member national agencies of IACAT, attending more than 60 IACAT meetings in 2023. The office also submits inputs for the IACAT's Annual Report and Annual Accomplishment Report regarding the cases of Filipinos trafficked overseas. It also contributes to IACAT's inputs to the annual Trafficking in Persons Report of the US Department of State. Among the subjects of meetings were the revisions on the guidelines on departure formalities for outbound Filipinos, unregulated adoptions of Filipino children abroad, trafficking for unregulated removal of human organs, issues related to seafarers and fisherfolk, referral systems, emerging issues and trends regarding human trafficking and smuggling in persons, and other related matters.

### **Migration and Health**

With the recent COVID-19 pandemic having impacted the lives and livelihoods of overseas Filipinos, DFA-UMWA participated in local and international activities relating to the issues of health and migration.

- [Support for Migration Statistics.](#) OMWA, as DFA representative to the Interagency Committee on Migration Statistics (IACMS), also supports and contributes inputs to the Philippine Statistical Development Plan (PSDP).
- [3rd Global Consultation on the Health of Refugees and Migrants, 13-15 June 2023, Rabat, Morocco.](#)



*Philippine Ambassador to Morocco Leslie J. Baja delivers the Philippine statement during the 3rd Global Consultation on the Health of Refugees and Migrants*

DFA-UMWA also participated in in-person and online preparatory meetings and was also represented during the following events:

- Program Implementation Review of the Inter-Agency Medical Repatriation Assistance Program (IMRAP), 16-18 August 2023, Pampanga; and
- 15th Philippine Migrant Health Network (PMHN) Meeting, 31 August 2023, Manila.

### **Regional Coordination Meeting (RCM) for Foreign Service Posts in Europe on Assistance-to-Nationals (ATN), Administrative, Consular, and Public and Cultural Diplomacy Matters, 04-05 December 2023, Athens, Greece**



*Photos during the RCM for FSPs in Europe on ATN, Administrative, Consular, and Public and Cultural Diplomacy Matters*

DFA-UMWA also organized a regional meeting with FSPs in Europe to discuss ATN concerns and their intersection with consular, administrative and public



diplomacy matters. Held in Athens, Greece, the RCM was held back-to-back with the International Forum on Migration co-organized with Philippine agencies providing services to overseas Filipinos.

### **ATN Training for Foreign Service Posts**

To ensure that FSPs are trained and equipped for ATN work, DFA-UMWA also provided training on ATN services and the handling of ATN cases involving violence against women (VAW). These sessions became part of the Department's series of Regional Training on Gender and Development (GAD), which was partially supported by the ATN Fund. The particular sessions conducted by DFA-UMWA, which was also a part of its Anti-VAW Campaign, are as follows:

- GAD Regional Training for Foreign Service Posts in Asia, 22 August 2023, Bangkok, Thailand;
- GAD Regional Training for Foreign Service Posts in the Middle East and Africa, 30 August 2023, Abu Dhabi, UAE;
- GAD Regional Training for Foreign Service Posts in the Americas, 05 September 2023, Mexico City, Mexico;
- GAD Regional Training for Foreign Service Posts in Europe, 26 October 2023, Rome, Italy; and
- Training for UMWA personnel, 29 November 2023, DFA Manila.

### **Turnover of ATN Duties from DFA to DMW, 01 July 2023**



*Secretary Manalo and DMW Secretary Maria Susana V. Ople, with DFA and DMW officials, during the official turnover of ATN functions for OFWs from DFA to DMW held on 01 July 2023 at the DFA*

Effective 01 July 2023, the DFA officially turned over its ATN functions for OFWs to DMW, in compliance with Republic Act No. 11641.

Under said law, all assistance cases involving OFWs, including legal or medical assistance, repatriation, and shipment of remains shall now be handled by the DMW through the use of its AKSYON Fund, except in countries where there are no resident MWOs under the DMW.

### **Working Luncheon with DMW Officials**

Prior to the official turnover, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo hosted a working luncheon at the DFA for DMW Secretary Maria Susana V. Ople and high-level officials of the DMW on 28 March 2023, with a view to strengthening the DMW's capabilities for providing ATN services to distressed OFWs.

The two heads of agencies engaged in broad-ranging discussions on the transition of ATN functions to DMW, including on training for DMW personnel, exchange of information on ATN processes, organization development, and continued close cooperation between Philippine Embassies, Consulates, and MWOs overseas under the One Country Team Approach.

Secretary Manalo welcomed Secretary Ople's earlier announcement that the DMW is ready to assume the responsibility of ATN for OFWs by the end of June, especially with Secretary Ople's confirmation that the AKSYON Fund was already being utilized. The AKSYON (Agarang Kalinga at Saklolo para sa mga OFW na Nangangailangan) Fund was created under RA 11641 for the DMW's ATN services, including legal assistance, for OFWs.

### **Regional ATN Training for the DMW and MWOs**

To prepare the DMW and its MWOs to handle the ATN cases, DFA-UMWA embarked on a series of training for the following groups:

- ATN Training for the DMW, 06-09 March 2023, DFA, Manila;
- ATN Regional Training for MWOs in ASPAC, 20-24 March 2023, Hong Kong SAR;
- ATN Regional Training for MWOs in Europe, 19-23 May 2023, Madrid, Spain;
- ATN Regional Training for MWOs in the Americas, 03-06 June 2023, Toronto, Canada; and
- ATN Training for MWOs in the Middle East and Africa Regions, 23-26 June 2023, Dubai, UAE.



## Partnerships with Stakeholders

### Celebration of the Month of Overseas Filipinos

While DFA-UMWA had several partnerships with stakeholders from the other government agencies and civil society organizations, the celebration of the Month of Overseas Filipinos (MOF) in December 2023 was the major undertaking for all migrant-serving agencies and organizations. Throughout the year, the Interagency Committee on the Month of Overseas Filipinos (IAC-MOF), Co-Chaired by the Philippine Migrant Rights Watch (PMRW) and the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) met in preparation for the main event in December.

- Migrant Fairs. This main event was preceded by the Migrant Fairs held in Butuan, Agusan del Norte (20 October 2023) and Bacolod, Negros Occidental (08-09 November 2023). Representatives from the DFA, CFO, DMW, OWWA, DOH, PAG-IBIG, and DOLE, among others, had booths to serve the public.



The Migrant Fair in Bacolod, Negros Occidental held on 08-09 November 2023

- International Forum on Migration (IFM), 03 December 2023, Athens, Greece. On 03 December 2023, the IFM was held in Athens, Greece in coordination between IAC-CFO, DFA and the Philippine Embassy in Greece.

The IFM was attended by around 200 people with over 50 government officials (based in the Philippines and other FSPs in Europe, including personnel of Athens PE), 62 representatives of the invited registered Filipino organizations in Greece and one from Cyprus. Representatives of Filipino organizations in the cities of Thessaloniki and Heraklion in Greece, and Nicosia, Cyprus, as well as the Philippine Honorary Consuls in Thessaloniki and Patras, Greece also joined through Zoom. More migrant Filipinos joined the livestream of some of the participants through their respective social media accounts.



Photo during the IFM on 03 December 2023 in Athens, Greece

The forum featured speakers from the participating Philippine government agencies such as the DFA, DA, DOH, DMW, DOT, Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), OWWA, the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), the Social Security System (SSS), and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), as well as civil society Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW), who presented updates and/or new programs for Filipinos overseas. The presentations focused on the forum's theme for this year – “Empowering Overseas Filipinos/OFWs Towards Sustainable Reintegration.”

### Interagency Meetings

DFA-UMWA also represented the Department in the following interagency bodies during events and meetings throughout the year:

- Sub-Committee on International Migration and Development (SC-IMD);
- Interagency Committee on Migration Statistics (IACMS);
- Task Force Drug Courier (TFDC);
- Interagency Committee on Philippine Schools Overseas (IACPSO); and
- Committee on the Special Protection of Children (CSPC).



DFA-UMWA also attended the Board Meetings of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) of which DFA is a member.

In addition, DFA-UMWA also organized interagency meetings on particular areas of concern, as follows:

- Managing the Entry and Stay in the Philippines of Distressed OFs Repatriated from Gaza and their Palestinian Spouses, 22 and 30 November 2023
- Preparations for an interagency committee on international students, with the Commission on Overseas Filipinos (CFO), 20 December 2023

**Other Meetings and Events**

DFA-UMWA also attended meetings and events co-organized by IOM, the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and for Philippine government agencies and migrant-focused civil society organizations. The major programs on migration managed by these international organizations are:

- BRIDGE (“Bridging Recruitment to Reintegration in Migration Governance”) Programme Philippines. This is a joint program of the DFA and the United Nations (through the UN Resident Coordinator in the Philippines) which supports initiatives contributing to the Philippines’ implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) Objective 6: Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work and Objective 21: Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration. The program is financially supported by the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF).
- Safe and Fair Program (2018-2023). This program, subtitled “Realizing women migrant workers’ rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region,” is part of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls. Implemented by the ILO and UN Women in collaboration with UNODC, the program aims to provide technical assistance and support to national agencies and migrant-serving organizations, with the overall objective of making labor migration safe and fair for all women in Southeast Asia.

DFA-UMWA further collaborated with forums co-organized by the Lawyers Beyond Borders Philippines, Inc. (LBB Philippines) and UN Women, as follows:

- Gender-Responsive and Survivor-Centered Police and Justice Services and Coordination and Referral Pathways for Women Migrant Workers Subject to Violence: An Online Validation Session on the Report on the Philippine-Kuwait Corridor, 14 September 2023;
- Towards Gender-Responsive And Survivor-Centered Police And Justice Services Coordination And Referral Pathways For Women Migrant Workers Subject To Violence: An Online Validation Session on the Report on the Philippine-Singapore Migration Corridor, 21 September 2023; and
- Round Table Discussion on the Recommendations and Proposed Revisions on the Procedures and Protocols on Coordination of Police and Justice Services for Women Migrant Workers Subject to Violence in Different Stages of Migration, Aligned With Gender-Responsive, Survivor-Centered and Trauma-Informed Approaches, 28 November 2023.

**Overseas Voting**

**Forum on Women and Overseas Voting, 23 May 2023**



The DFA’s Overseas Voting Secretariat (OVS) successfully concluded a forum on women and overseas voting, titled “Beyond Suffrage”, at the





Diamond Hotel on 23 May 2023, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Republic Act No. 10590 and the 86th anniversary of women's right to suffrage.

The forum gathered resource speakers from the government and the academe to speak on the milestones achieved in overseas voting and to honor the pivotal role of Filipino women in the democratic process.

The DFA was led by DFA-OVS Chairperson and Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo. Commission on Elections (COMELEC) Chairman George Erwin M. Garcia graced the event and highlighted COMELEC's policy decision to adopt internet overseas voting for the 2025 elections. The forum was attended by DFA officials and employees, partner agencies, civil society organizations and the media.

**Signing of Memorandum of Agreement with UBE Media, Inc. and UBE Express, Inc., 21 November 2023**



*Undersecretary Domingo with Ms. Donna May Lina, President of UBE Media, Inc., and Dr. Gabriel D. A. David, President of UBE Media Express, Inc.*

DFA-OVS signed a Memorandum of Agreement with UBE Media, Inc. and UBE Express, Inc. on 21 November 2023 at the Bulwagang Elpidio Quirino, DFA Building, for the development, production, and promotion of Overseas Voting (OV) and Registration information materials.

In his welcome remarks, DFA-OVS Chairperson and Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo, stated that "This is not a just a renewal of the wonderful cooperation we have with UBE Media and UBE Express, but also we stand to reaffirm our commitment to promote every overseas Filipino's right to vote."

Ms. Donna May Lina, President of UBE Media, Inc. and Dr. Gabriel D.A. David, President of UBE Express, Inc. expressed their full support on this collaborative endeavor.

**Training for Filipino Community Leaders (TFCL) for Promotion of Overseas Voting and Registration**

DFA-OVS, in collaboration with COMELEC, FSI, and the Philippine Consulates General in Barcelona, Hong Kong and Osaka conducted Trainings for Filipino Community Leaders (TFCL) for the promotion of overseas voting and registration. More than 130 Filipino Community leaders attended the training sessions.



*TFCL in Barcelona, Spain, 25 November 2023*



*TFCL in Hong Kong, 03 December 2023*



*TFCL in Hiroshima, Japan, 10 December 2023*

COMELEC Commissioner Marlon S. Casquejo, Commissioner in Charge for the Office for Overseas Voting, was also in attendance and served as resource person for the training. Commissioner Casquejo provided updates on developments regarding the implementation of internet voting for the 2025 National Elections and answered queries



from the participants in the Open Forum.

The TFCL is the first of its kind to be conducted by DFA-OVS with a view towards engaging Filipino Communities abroad and directly enlisting their participation and support in the Department's overseas voter registration efforts.

To note, from 01 January to 31 December 2023, the number of new overseas voting registrants is at 118,383 (see Annex A for details).



## B. DELIVERY OF CONSULAR SERVICES

The delivery of consular services, including the processing of passports and other consular documents, has been a testament to the DFA's commitment to serving Filipinos as efficiently and conveniently as possible. For 2023, the DFA has accomplished the following on consular services:

### Passport Services

The Department issued a total of 3,179,842 passports from January to December 2023. This number represents a decline of 22.97% from the over four million passports issued in 2022. Such decline and the lower demand for passports are attributed to the implementation of RA 10928 which extended the validity of Philippine passports from five (5) years to ten (10) years.

Breakdown of passport issuance at various issuing sites is as follows:

Passport Issuing Site	No. of Passports Issued	
	2022	2023
DFA Manila (Aseana)	336,756	295,624
NCR Consular Offices	492,095	469,321
Temporary Off-Site Passport Service	1,184,753	648,345
Regional Consular Offices	1,409,971	1,540,968
Foreign Service Posts	704,291	225,584
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,127,866</b>	<b>3,179,842</b>

The Passport Director's Office facilitated the issuance of 8,245 passport certifications for the year of 2023.

The Individual Processing Section also rejected 42,943 passport applications for the year. Applications are usually rejected due to the submission of incomplete requirements or fake documents, and erroneous entry in the application form.

### ***Machine Readable Convention Travel Document (MRCTD) Issuances***

Effective 01 March 2016, the Department started issuing 44-page Machine Readable Convention Travel Documents (MRCTDs) in booklet format to refugees and stateless persons residing in the Philippines. The MRCTD is valid for five (5) years only and may be used for multiple trips abroad. It is personalized in security inks with laminates and is compliant with the global standards outlined in the Guide for Issuing Machine Readable Convention Travel Documents for Refugees and Stateless Persons as issued by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the UNHCR in October 2013.

A total of 120 MRCTDs were issued to refugees and stateless persons for the year 2023.

### ***Passport-On-Wheels (POW) Services***

A total of ninety-five (95) Passport-On-Wheels (POW) services were conducted in various sites in the Philippines for the year 2023 (see Annex B for details on POW services). These POW activities resulted in 50,859 ePassports issued to applicants.

The program, launched in January 2018, aims to cater to more Filipinos by enabling them, especially those who reside in places not easily accessible to DFA consular offices, to obtain a passport by bringing the service right to their area.





### Serbisyo Fair

In August 2023, the Passport Division participated at the first ever Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair, which aims to make social services and government programs more accessible to the Filipino people.

Since then 9 Serbisyo Fairs have been conducted nationwide and the division catered to 3,915 applicants.

conducted by the Passport Division. Frontline and Backend personnel assigned in the said division as well as TOPS personnel in NCR participated in the seminars. Speakers from various DFA offices as well as other government offices like the Civil Service Commission (CSC), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and Philippine National Police (PNP) were invited to give a thorough discussion on public ethics, citizenship evaluation and fraud detection.



Serbisyo Fair in Biliran (26-27 August 2023)



Serbisyo Fair in Ilocos Norte (23-24 September 2023)



Serbisyo Fair in Bukidnon (11-12 November 2023)



Training on Ethics in Public Sector Management (13 April 2023)



Passport Retooling Seminar for Frontline Personnel (Basic Document Fraud Detection) (24 June 2023)



Passport Training Program for TOPS Personnel (11 November 2023)

### Retooling Seminars on Passport Processes and Requirements for Passport Division Personnel and Officers-in-Charge of Various COs

A total of five (5) training and retooling seminars on passport processes and requirements were

### Interagency Committee Against Passport Irregularities

On 06 December 2023, the Inter-Agency Committee Against Passport Irregularities (ICPI) reconvened to address the alleged issuance of



Philippine passports to foreign nationals and to strengthen coordination among member agencies to deter passport irregularities.



*Members of the ICPI during the 4th ICPI Meeting*

The meeting was chaired by Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo and Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Adelio Angelito S. Cruz. The meeting was attended by representatives from PSA, BI, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA), NBI, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the PNP.

Undersecretary Domingo highlighted that the committee should adopt a mechanism wherein tighter and closer coordination among member agencies shall be created to ensure immediate verification and cross-matching of information contained in PSA certificates and government issued identification cards through a memorandum of agreement between the DFA and ICPI member agencies, as well as with ID issuing agencies. This measure is also envisioned to strengthen interagency cooperation to ensure real-time verification due to the proliferation of fraudulent documents and government identification cards used in passport applications.

The DFA further reiterated to its partner agencies that Philippine Passports are not for sale to foreign nationals and does not tolerate attempts of foreign nationals to secure Philippine Passports through illicit means.

The DFA emphasizes that it strictly observes a Zero Tolerance Policy for Philippine identification documents obtained through illegal means and continues to coordinate with the concerned government agencies to tighten security measures, streamline verification of identification documents, and facilitate investigation and filing of appropriate charges.

### **Improvements on Passport Services**

- Implemented a queueing system and reconfigured the layout of the passport processing office in DFA Aseana



*Implementation of the queueing system with the provided tablets to each Passport processor personnel*

- Reduced Turnaround Time for Passport Processing

Starting 24 July 2023, the turnaround time for processing of passports in the National Capital Region was reduced from 12 to 10 working days for regular applications and from 7 to 5 working days for expedited applications.

For other consular offices, passport applicants can receive their passports in 12 working days from the previous 15 working days for regular applications; and in 7 working days from 8 working days for expedited release.



## **Authentication Services**

The DFA had issued a total of 532,994 Apostille Certificates from January-December 2023 at the Office of Consular Affairs (OCA) in DFA Aseana, DFA NCR East, DFA NCR West, DFA NCR South, DFA NCR Northeast, CO Pampanga, CO Davao, CO Cebu, CO Iloilo, CO La Union, CO Cagayan de Oro and CO Legazpi.

### ***Opening of Authentication Services in CO Legazpi, 11 December 2023***



*Dir. Dyan Kristine B. Miranda-Pastrana of DFA OCA Authentication Division and Ms. Maritess Saberola, OIC of Consular Office Legazpi, together with Albay and Legazpi City LGU and Pacific Mall officials led the opening of Authentication Services in CO Legazpi*

On 11 December 2023, CO Legazpi officially launched its Authentication Services that were attended by OCA Acting Director Atty. Dyan Kristine B. Miranda-Pastrana, Albay Vice Governor Glenda Ong Bongao, Mr. Anton Jacomina, VP for Human Resources of the Metro Retail Stores Group Inc (MRSGI) of Pacific Mall, local city officials and local media. CO Legazpi is the 11th Consular Office offering full authentication services to the public and the first one to be opened since the pandemic. It is expected to cater 120-150 documents daily coming from Bicol region, Samar and Leyte.

To date the CO has already processed 288 documents for Apostille since its soft launching.

## ***Coordination with Partner Government Agencies in strengthening the Philippine Apostille from fraud documents***

The Authentication Division engaged various meetings with the following partner government agencies in strengthening policies and practices for handling fraudulent and spurious document for Apostille:

- Meeting with the Supreme Court - Office of the Court Administrator for the ease of verification of notarial and court documents (30 March 2023). The Division has also issued a communication to all Authentication Personnel with regard to streamlining the requests for specimen signatures of court officials.



- Ocular inspection of the PSA Main Office (13 April 2023)



- Meeting with the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) on Procedure for Confirmation of Reciprocity Agreement between and Philippines and Other Countries (17 March 2023)
- Meeting with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) Pasay-Parañaque-Las Piñas-Muntinlupa Chapter on the procedures for the notarization of documents was held on (08 June 2023)
- Meeting with the Department of Labor and



Employment (DOLE) on Spurious Certificate of Employment (COEs) from Foreign Nationals applying for Apostille, (18 August 2023)

- Introductory Meetings with the Embassy of the United States of America for the possible collaboration training on fraud prevention (14 and 26 September 2023)

On 23 May 2023, a public advisory was published as part of the Authentication Division's campaign against fraud and spurious documents. The Division created the working Zero-Tolerance Policy procedures and guidelines for applicants who upon investigation had submitted spurious and fraudulent documents, as well as hoarding of appointment slots. A total of 186 documents were confiscated from January to December 2023. Fraudulent documents confiscated are typically documents that are washed out, and tampered with/with forged signatories.

The Division held the First Batch of Questioned Document Examination Course conducted by the PNP - Forensic Group - Questioned Document Examination Division, 19 - 22 September conducted online (asynchronous) with an onsite practical training on 30 September-01 October 2023.



### ***Austria's Withdrawal of Objection against the Philippines' Accession to the Apostille Convention***

On 03 May 2023, the Republic of Austria through its Embassy in Manila sent Note No. PROT/0056/202 conveying its withdrawal of objection to the Philippine's accession to the Apostille Convention, and that there will be no need for legalization of Philippine Apostilles of public documents to have legal effect in Austria effective 01 June 2023. This development entails a significant step of the Department's proliferation against fraudulent documents.

### ***Study Visits of Foreign Ministries and Embassies on the Implementation of the Philippine Apostille***

The following foreign countries requested to visit DFA OCA-Aseana to learn on the Authentication Division's implementation of the Apostille Convention particularly the workflow of daily operation, best practices, and challenges encountered:

- Study Visit and Courtesy Call of the Department of Consular Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand (16 August 2023)



- Study Visit and Meeting with the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Officials (17 August 2023)



- Study Visit and Courtesy Call of the Danish National ID Centre (NIDC) Officials (29 September 2023)



- Study Visit and Courtesy Call of the Norwegian ID (NID) Centre Officials (24 October 2023)



24 August 2023 at the DFA-Aseana Building led by Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo and Undersecretary David Almirol, Jr. of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT). The soft launching of the e-Visa system is the product of the strong partnership between the DFA and DICT, which was formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in April 2023.

### Participation in Other Engagements

The Authentication Division representatives attended other public engagements to accommodate queries regarding Authentication/Apostille services:

- Villar's SIPAG's 12th OFW & Family Summit, with the theme "Masaganang Kabuhayan Para sa OFWs and Families" held at The Tent at Vista Global South, Las Piñas City on 10 November 2023 (left photo); and



- International Bazaar Foundation 2023 held in PICC Forum Tent 1 - 3 on 19 November 2023 (right photo)

### Visa Services

#### Soft Launch of Philippine e-Visa System

The DFA marked the soft launching of the Philippine e-Visa system in a symbolic ceremony on



Secretary Manalo and DICT Undersecretary David Almirol, Jr. symbolically soft-launching the Philippine e-Visa system (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)

The e-Visa system was soft-launched for beta testing, led by the Philippine Consulate General in Shanghai, China. This is aligned with the Philippines' commitment to Initiative 13 of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC).

Through the e-Visa system, foreign nationals can lodge their online visa applications faster and remotely. Philippine e-Visa holders will no longer have visa stickers affixed to their passports, making their journey to the Philippines smooth, convenient, and expeditious. The e-Visa signifies the transition of the DFA's primordial mandate of issuing visas for foreign nationals entering the country in a secure digital environment.

Prior to the soft launch of the e-Visa system, the following activities were undertaken:

- General Meetings and Technical Working Group Meetings (including Internal Testing) between OCA and DICT since February 2023;
- Training and workshop for OCA personnel on the formulation of OCA's Information System Strategic Plan (ISSP) in April 2023, with resource persons from DFA-OAMSS and DICT;
- Improved Philippine e-Visa system for 9(a) applications and training of Visa personnel





conducted on 10 May 2023. Ongoing discussions to finalize the incorporation of derogatory verification in the e-Visa system;

- OCA's proposed revisions to the e-Visa system regularly shared with DICT in since May 2023 before projected roll-out
  - Automated visa issuance reports
  - Derogatory verification (NICA, BI, DFA Visa LOL)
  - Instructions in foreign languages
- Consular Consultation Meeting with all seven (7) FSPs in China on 04-05 July 2023 to discuss visa-related concerns, operational challenges, and initiatives and recommendations on pressing concerns related to the issuance of Philippine visas in China, and series of virtual trainings and testing of the prototype e-Visa system (front-end and back-end) with the seven (7) China FSPs and DICT in July and August 2023

Specimens of the Philippine e-visa were disseminated to CAAP, CAB, BI, and Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Manila for the recognition of e-Visas alongside other modalities of visa issuances (i.e., MRV).

After the soft launch, the first e-Visa holders from China arrived in September 2023. Then, e-Visa operations were expanded to all seven (7) China FSPs.



*DFA-OCA and BI officials welcome first Chinese e-Visa holders*



*Photos during the Consular Consultation Meeting with all seven (7) Philippine Foreign Service Posts in China*

Throughout its operations from August to December 2023, a total of 4,090 e-Visas were issued by China FSPs.

While e-Visa operations were suspended, the DFA is preparing to resume them in China and expand to India in 2024.

***Convening of Inaugural Consular Consultation Meeting with Heads of China FSPs, 04-05 July 2023, Manila***

OCA held the inaugural Consular Consultation Meeting with the Consuls General of all seven (7) FSPs in the People's Republic of China in Pasay City on 04-05 July 2023. The two-day meeting discussed various consular issues and projects intended to assist the government in promoting the President's economic agenda, notably in the field of visitor arrivals.

The thrust for the digitalization of visas was affirmed by the policy directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on 26 January 2023 to roll out e-visas to reinvigorate the country's tourism sector. The DFA is ready to extend its support to partner agencies in fulfilling the presidential directive of increasing tourism arrivals while protecting our country's borders.

The meeting involved the stock-taking of operational challenges and sharing of consular-related experiences and updates. The meeting also gathered perspectives and adopted policy recommendations to support in particular the President's policy directive of 26 January 2023 to significantly enhance and transform the Philippines' tourism industry with a view of increasing tourist arrivals for 2023 and beyond. China reopened its





borders and resumed outbound tourism for Chinese nationals on 06 February 2023.

**Assistance Rendered for the Philippine Hosting of International Events**

In 2023, OCA-Visa Division provided assistance in endorsing the visa applicants entering the country for major international events hosted by the Philippines, particularly the FIBA Basketball World Cup held in September 2023 in Manila. A total of 2,064 foreign nationals arrived in the country to participate in the World Cup with the assistance of the Visa Division and FSPs.

**Visa Issuances in 2023**

For the first time after the reinstatement of pre-pandemic visa procedures in 2022, OCA-Visa Division exceeded its target of 142,293 visas with the issuance of a total of 207,947 visas in 2023 in close coordination with all 94 FSPs. Of this number, 3,120 are renewals at DFA Aseana. (See Annex C for details)

**Convening of 5th Philippines-Korea Joint Consular Consultation Meeting In Seoul, South Korea**

In collaboration with the Philippine Embassy in Seoul, OCA-Visa Division headed the administrative and substantive preparations for the successful holding of the 5th Philippines-Republic of Korea Joint Consular Consultation Meeting (JCCM) on 12 September 2023 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The Division chaired several inter-agency and inter-office meetings with concerned DFA Offices, government agencies and Seoul PE to discuss and finalize the agenda of the meeting to promote consular cooperation with the Republic of Korea. The said JCCM is the first to be conducted by OCA-Visa since the COVID-19 pandemic.



*5th Philippines-Korea Joint Consular Consultation Meeting on 12 September 2023 in Seoul, Republic of Korea with the Philippine delegation led by Undersecretary Domingo, accompanied by Philippine Ambassador to the Republic of Korea Maria Theresa B. Dizon-De Vega and Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Henry S. Bensurto, Jr.*

**Participation in International Events**

DFA-OCA also participated in the following international events related to visa matters:

- APEC First Senior Officials’ Meeting and Related Meetings (SOM1), 14-28 February 2023, Palm Springs, California, USA
- APEC Third Senior Officials’ Meeting and Related Meetings (SOM3), 29-30 July 2023, Seattle, Washington, USA
- 26th ASEAN Directors-General Meeting of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Affairs Division of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (DGICM) and its Related Meetings, 08-11 August 2023, Phuket, Thailand

**Processing of Consular Records**

In 2023, the Consular Records Division (CRD) transmitted to the PSA, a total of 64,430 civil registry reports, signifying a 10.77% increase from the previous year, comprising of the following:

- Report of Birth
- Report of Marriage
- Report of Death
- Report of Fetal Death
- RA9048 (Petition on Clerical Errors)
- Supplemental Reports
- Legal Instruments (RA 9255)
- Conversion to Islam
- Renunciation of PH citizenship (MECO-Taiwan)
- Annotated ROB [PSA MC 2021-20]
- Annotated ROM [PSA MC 2021-20]
- Legal Instruments-Legitimation by Subsequent Marriage of Parents

**Opening of Consular Office in Pagadian City**

The DFA, in partnership with the Local Government of Pagadian, formally opened its Consular Office (CO) in Pagadian City, Zamboanga Del Sur on 20 June 2023. DFA Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo and Pagadian City Mayor Samuel S. Co led the inauguration of the CO on the eve of the 54th Charter Anniversary of the city.



The program also included the signing ceremony of the MOA between the DFA and the Local Government of Pagadian on the establishment of CO Pagadian. The MOA signing was witnessed by Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Henry S. Bensurto, Jr. and Pagadian City Vice Mayor Baldomero Fernandez.



Assistant Secretary Bensurto, Pacadian City Vice Mayor Baldomero Fernandez, Undersecretary Domingo, and Pagadian City Samuel S. Co pose for a photo after the signing ceremony

### **Coordination with Consular Offices nationwide**

The Department, through the OCA-Consular Office Coordinating Division (COCD) ensured the compliance of all thirty-eight (38) Consular Offices nationwide with the Department’s directives, especially the delivery of consular services in the shift back to pre-pandemic operations. COCD also continued to assist applicants referred to Manila (OCA-Aseana) by the COs.

### **Other Accomplishments**

#### ***Further improvement of client services***

- **Public Assistance Desk.** In 2023, a total of 20,574 applicants were accommodated at the Public Assistance Desk and assisted by Consular Affairs Public Assistance Center (CAPAC) Personnel. These are applicants who had emergency cases, releasing concerns, unsuccessful appointment concerns, fraud-related queries, and complaints. Through the strategic reorganization of OCA Frontline units, and the relocation of the Public Assistance Desk, the application process became more streamlined which improved efficiency, client satisfaction and effectively

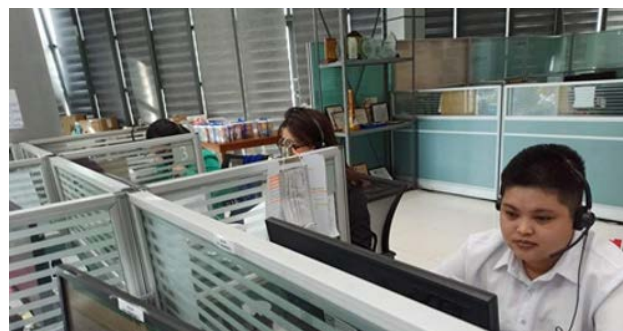
reduced disorganization in the queuing management.



CAPAC Public Assistance Desks at the DFA-OCA Aseana

- **Consular Information Center (CIC).** In 2023, CIC personnel answered a total of 30,817 calls and addressed 44,048 concerns.

Inbound and outbound telephone calls were inoperational starting 09 January 2023, which accounted for the decrease in the number of calls answered for the month (887 calls and 1146 concerns). CRS immediately reported the issue to PITS and OAMSS for resolution. The inbound calls became operational on 06 February 2023; however, outbound calls remain inoperative. During the said period, CIC personnel focused on the mobile hotlines and also assisted in answering CCU emails.



DFA-OCA CIC at work

- Clients' Concerns Unit (CCU). Lastly, the CCU, responsible for addressing incoming complaints and queries through emails, responded to a total of 65,305 emails for the year 2023.

### **DFA and DICT Memorandum of Understanding on Synchronized ICT System**



*Secretary Manalo, and DICT Secretary Ivan John E. Uy sign the Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate and work on a synchronized and well-coordinated ICT system*

On 17 April 2023, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, and DICT Secretary Ivan John E. Uy signed a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate and work on a synchronized and well-coordinated ICT system at the Carlos P. Garcia Hall in the DFA.

The MOU formalizes the synergistic cooperation between the DFA and DICT towards the digitization of Philippine consular services, namely the PH passports, visas and apostille. The MOU is envisioned to promote and ensure the integration, interoperability and interconnection of the DFA and DICT's respective systems and applications with each other to achieve a more effective and efficient delivery of frontline services.

### **Memorandum of Agreement with DDMP REIT Inc. on Passport and Apostille Releasing Service Center at DoubleDragon Plaza**

The DFA and DDMP REIT, Inc. signed on 31 August 2023 the Memorandum of Agreement on the continued use and establishment of the Passport and Apostille Releasing Service Center at the DoubleDragon Plaza at DD Meridian Park.

Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Henry S. Bensurto, Jr., in his remarks during the event, highlighted that the signing of the MOA is a

testament of the DFA's unyielding commitment to make consular services closer to and easier for the public. Undersecretary for Civilian Security and Consular Affairs Jesus S. Domingo, who signed the document on behalf of the DFA, also underscored the good working relationship between the DFA and DoubleDragon. The Undersecretary also signified that the signing of the MOA will allow for the continued efficient delivery of passport and apostille services to the general public and pave the way for similar initiatives that will further enhance consular services for all the Filipino people.



*Assistant Secretary Bensurto, Undersecretary Domingo, DDMP REIT President Ferdinand J. Sia, DDMP REIT Head of Corporate Affairs Mr. Jonathan D. Umali (Photo courtesy of DFA-OPCD)*

On 24 September 2021, in order to decongest long queues at OCA Aseana, and in coordination with DoubleDragon Properties Corporation, all Passport releasing services for OCA-Aseana, Temporary Off-Site Passport Service (TOPS) SM MOA, Sucat and Uptown Malls were transferred to Islas Pinas, GF, DoubleDragon Plaza, Macapagal Boulevard in Pasay City. On 11 April 2023, all Authentication and Apostille releasing services were also relocated to DoubleDragon Plaza.





## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

# Other Organizational Accomplishments





## A. IMPROVING BUREAUCRATIC EFFICIENCY

### Internal Audit Engagements

In 2023, the Department, through the Internal Audit Service (IAS), successfully completed 26 audit engagements which played a crucial role in evaluating adherence to regulations, instituting corrective actions and improvements, and identifying good practices. Based on its audit engagements, IAS made constructive recommendations that had a positive impact on Department's operations and contributed to its strategic objectives particularly on the following:

- Improving consular services - procedural and operational enhancements that led to faster and more secured frontline processes ultimately benefiting consular clients.
- Strengthening diplomacy program implementation - institutional improvements in support of national security, economic, cultural and public diplomacy objectives of the Department.
- Fortifying security measures - evaluation of the Department's security management aimed at reducing risks and deficiencies, and better protection of Department assets and resources.
- Enhancing administrative management - Availability and accessibility to trainings for all personnel, ensuring complete staff complement, and enhanced compliance with administrative regulations.



*Exit Conference of the Internal Audit of Bangkok PE on 04-11 August 2023*

### *Strengthening DFA's Internal Audit System*

The DFA continues to strengthen its internal audit system through periodic review of regulations, updating of internal control questionnaires; and utilization of digital platforms for audit engagements. As an offshoot of its audit engagements, IAS further enriched the DFA's Knowledge Management System (KMS) through the creation of knowledge management projects for sharing with other offices. IAS personnel actively participated in trainings on internal audit, substantive and administrative matters."

### *Advancing Internal Audit in the Government*

Through engagements with key external stakeholders such as the Office of the President - Office of Deputy Executive Secretary for Internal Audit (OP-ODESIA) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the DFA contributed to further advancing internal audit in the government. IAS participated in the benchmarking study of OP-ODESIA on good practices and digitalization of internal audit processes, and recommended to DBM a change in the nomenclature of IAS divisions which was later on adopted through DBM Circular Letter No. 2023-14 on the Revised Guidelines and Staffing of an Internal Audit Unit.



*IAS Officers with Deputy Executive Secretary for Internal Audit Ricojude Janvier M. Echiverri at Malacañang, 6 October 2023*



## **Administrative Inspections of Philippine Foreign Service Posts**

### ***Administrative Inspection at Philippine Embassy in Abu Dhabi, Philippine Consulate General in Dubai and Philippine Embassy in Manama, 15-22 March 2023***

All the Posts inspected by Undersecretary Morales, namely the Philippine Embassy in Abu Dhabi, Philippine Consulate General in Dubai, and Philippine Embassy in Manama, conveyed the common challenge of working under reduced budget on MOOE, and the resulting incurrence of budget deficits. In particular, they pointed out their difficulty complying with host country laws and regulations regarding benefits of local hires, as payment of salaries of local hires have been shifted from PS to MOOE.

During the administrative inspection of Manama PE, Undersecretary for Administration Antonio A. Morales officiated the inauguration of the New Philippine Chancery in Manama, Bahrain.



*Undersecretary Morales leads the unveiling of the Philippine Embassy marker at the new Chancery in Manama, Bahrain, together with Undersecretary for Consular and Administrative Affairs Dr. Mohamed Ali Bahzad of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, Philippine Ambassador-designate to Bahrain Anne Jalando-on Louis, and Ambassadors of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, and Chargé d'Affaires of Brunei Darussalam*



*One of the four villas comprising the new PHL Chancery in Adliya, Kingdom of Bahrain*

### ***Administrative Inspection at the Philippine Consulate General in Guangzhou and the Philippine Consulate General in Hong Kong SAR PCG, 08-12 May 2023***

Undersecretary for Administration Antonio A. Morales attended the inauguration of the New Philippine Consulate General in Guangzhou and conducted an inspection of the premises. A meeting with the officers and staff of the Consulate was also conducted to discuss their administrative and other concerns.



*Undersecretary Morales, Philippine Ambassador to China Jaime FlorCruz, Philippine Consul General in Guangzhou Louis Alferz, Guangdong Foreign Affairs Office Inspector Luo Jun, and Guangdong International Building General Manager Yue Xiaolong (Photo courtesy of Guangzhou PCG)*

Undersecretary Morales also conducted an inspection of the Official Residence acquired by the Philippine government in 1966, and the leased premises of the Philippine Consulate General in Hong Kong. A consultation with the officers and staff of the Consulate was held to discuss their concerns on the hiring of local hires, demands of consular and frontline work vis-à-vis the existing plantilla of DFA personnel, office management and operations, and well-being of the personnel noting that Hong Kong has one of the most number of OFWs.

### ***Administrative Inspection at the Philippine Embassy in Ankara and Philippine Consulate General in Istanbul, 13-20 August 2023***

Undersecretary for Administration Antonio A. Morales conducted an administrative inspection of the property and personnel at the Philippine Embassy in Ankara and Philippine Consulate General in Istanbul, which served as an opportunity to observe and assess operations overseas and to hold dialogue with DFA officers and staff to come up with more realistic programs aimed at improving office management and operations, including the



well-being of our personnel and their families at Post. The inspection also gathered many best practices, in consideration of local practice, that may be applied to other Posts.

**Administrative Inspection at the Philippine Embassy in Cairo and Meeting with Officials of the Administrative Capital for Urban Development, 22 November 2023**

Upon the administrative inspection of the Philippine Embassy in Cairo led by Undersecretary Antonio A. Morales, Philippine Ambassador to Egypt Ezzedin Tago and Cairo PE's other officers exhibited a well-managed Embassy and supervision over Post's personnel. The Chancery's location is accessible to the public and Post's personnel, and has adequate space for the conduct of Post's daily official activities.



*Undersecretary for Administration Antonio A. Morales met with Administrative Capital for Urban Development (ACUD) Chairman and Managing Director Khaled Mahmoud Abbas and Director Khaled Elhusseiny to discuss the proposed acquisition by the DFA of Lot E208 located at the New Administrative Capital of Egypt*



*ACUD Director Khaled Elhusseiny showed the Philippine delegation the proposed property to be acquired by the Philippine government and other developments in the area, including government offices, housing projects, hotels, the new financial district, the UN complex which will house 19 UN offices, the diplomatic quarter, and commercial centers.*

**Administrative Inspection at the Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece, 02 December 2023**

Undersecretary for Administration Antonio A. Morales conducted an administrative inspection of the Chancery and Official Residence of the Philippine Embassy in Athens on 02 December 2023. They were found to be generally suitable to the needs of the Head of Post, officers and personnel.



*Undersecretary Morales with Philippine Ambassador to Greece Giovanni Palec during the administrative inspection of Athens PE*

**Regional Coordination Meeting on Assistance-To-Nationals (ATN), Consular, Administrative, and Public and Cultural Diplomacy matters for Posts in Europe, 03 to 04 December 2024, Athens, Greece**

Undersecretary for Administration Antonio A. Morales' presentation focused on the implementation of the office's mandate through the functions of its line offices and committees. The participants from FSPs in Europe were also provided with updates on the accomplishments of the various Department Committees chaired by UA. Some of the policies recently adopted by the Department were also discussed to address concerns raised by the FSPs in their respective presentations. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management Mersole J. Mellejor attended physically, while Assistant Secretary for Asset Management and Support Services Patrick John U. Hilado and Assistant Secretary for Financial Management Services Domingo P. Nolasco attended virtually.



*Undersecretary Morales and Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Eduardo José A. De Vega with the Heads of Posts in Europe during the Regional Coordination Meeting for Posts in Europe*



*Presentation by Philippine Consul General in Istanbul Shirlene C. Mananquil during the Regional Coordination Meeting for Posts in Europe*

### **High-level Meetings**

In 2023, the Undersecretary for Administration Antonio A. Morales met with high-level representatives from other states to discuss technical matters that have a direct impact on PH's bilateral relations.

#### ***Meetings with Representatives of the Kingdom of Bahrain***

Undersecretary Morales met with Undersecretary for Consular and Administrative Affairs Dr. Mohamed Ali Bahzad of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain during the administrative inspection on 19 March 2023. Undersecretary Bahzad conveyed that Bahrain is working on establishing an Embassy in the Philippines within the year. He added that this will allow Bahrain to provide more services to both Bahrainis and Filipinos in the Philippines and create opportunities to increase its political, economic and cultural cooperation with the Philippines.

Undersecretary Morales expressed hope that the 1st PH-BH bilateral consultations would be convened at the earliest possible time to facilitate the implementation of bilateral cooperation activities between the two countries.

Undersecretary Bahzad shared that the Ministry is implementing "digital transformation," including providing online services for attestation of documents and other consular services and that the Embassy that will be opened in Manila will be implementing this digitization.

Undersecretary Morales informed Undersecretary Bahzad that the Department is developing its digital transformation strategy and the latter offered to share with the Philippine side MOFA's expertise on this matter.



*Undersecretary with Undersecretary for Consular and Administrative Affairs Dr. Mohamed Ali Bahzad of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain*

They met again in June 2023 to discuss further Bahrain's plans to open an embassy in Manila.

#### ***Meeting with Representatives of the Arab Republic of Egypt***

Undersecretary Morales met with Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister for Financial, Administrative and Administrative Capital Affairs Yasser Reda who gave assurances that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will extend all assistance needed by the Philippines in order to satisfy its internal laws and regulations, including the issuance of a certification/ministerial decree as proof of ownership of the Philippine government of its purchased lot.



*Undersecretary and Philippine Ambassador to Egypt, H.E. Ezzedin H. Tago in a meeting with Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister for Financial, Administrative and Administrative Capital Affairs Yasser Reda*

#### ***Meeting with Representatives of the Republic of Slovenia***

In July 2023, Undersecretary Morales also met with Renata Cvelbar Bek, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia to discuss various areas of cooperation. This meeting was followed by another discussion in early January 2024 around the proposal of Slovenia to open a Consulate General in Batangas.



### Other Meetings

In addition to these meetings with external counterparts by the Undersecretary for Administration, the following organizational meetings were also held in 2023:

Committees	2023 Meetings	Summary of Outcomes
<b>Chaired by the Undersecretary for Administration</b>		
Change Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January 2023</li> <li>August 2023</li> <li>September 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enacted decisions regarding the Reorganization of OPCD into OPD and OCD</li> <li>Provided management direction for the Department Order on Strengthening DFA Mindanao</li> <li>Facilitated high-level discussions on the future state of UMWA</li> </ul>
Performance Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>February 2023</li> <li>October 2023 (2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitated the preparation for the submission of 2022 PBB requirements</li> <li>Enacted decisions pertaining to appeals on performance ratings of personnel.</li> </ul>
Properties Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>07 March 2023</li> <li>17 May 2023</li> <li>31 July 2023</li> <li>27 October 2023</li> </ul>	Discussed property-related concerns of the Department, FSPs and COs
UA Line Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>03 February 2023</li> <li>31 August 2023</li> <li>17 November 2023</li> </ul>	Discussed updates and concerns from HRMO, Office of the Protocol, OAMSS, OFMS and BAC related to the general administrative operations of the Department
DFA Leadership Huddle	Total of 12 huddles	Offices provided updates on their offices projects and programs, and discussed proposals for possible policy initiatives on various areas of the Department's functions
<b>Chaired by the Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs</b>		
Policy Advisory Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>03 March 2023</li> <li>15 June 202</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewed and updated the Department Order on Hardship Post Classification</li> <li>Reviewed and updated Department Order on Jurisdiction of FSPs</li> <li>Identified four (4) FSPs for opening/re-opening in 2024, i.e., Philippine Embassies in Colombia, Finland, Ireland, and Romania</li> <li>Directed to initiate comprehensive study of quantifying criteria for classifying Hardship Posts</li> <li>Reviewed existing and proposed policies/laws that impinge on the mandate and operations of the DFA</li> </ul>

### Board of Foreign Service Administration (BFSA) Regular Board Meetings

RBM 2023-01 (Promotion of Officers)	31 March 2023	Promotion to CM I (2) Promotion to CM II (2) Promotion to CARMIN (2) Promotion to FSO I (11) Promotion to FSO II (37) Promotion to FSO III (28)
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RBM 2023-02 (Other Administrative Matters)	23 June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on the revision of the Guidelines on Members of the Household of Foreign Service Personnel Other Private Staff</li> <li>• Discussion on the Admonition remarks in the Personnel Information Sheet</li> </ul>
RBM 2023-03 (Promotion of Officers)	09 October 2023	Promotion to CM I (6) Promotion to CM II (14) Promotion to CARMIN (15) Promotion to FSO I (15) Promotion to FSO III (1)
RBM 2023-04 (Administrative Cases and Other Matters)	23 October 2023	Issuance of Department Order No. 2023-012 (Revised Guidelines on Members of the Household of Foreign Service Personnel Other Private Staff)

**Expanded Internal Quality Audit and ISO 9001:2015 Surveillance Audit**



*TUV Nord Philippines, Inc. recommended the maintenance of the DFA's ISO 9001:2015 certificate*

In line with the improvements in the implementation of quality management introduced through the promulgation of Department Order No. 2023-006, the DFA's Internal Quality Audit was expanded to cover organizational units in the delivering frontline services nationwide.

For 2023, the QMS Unit was able to conduct onsite audits for 13 home office units, 10 Consular Offices in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, and 8 Consular divisions from 14 June to 07 September 2023. During the 13 week-period, a total of thirty (30) new Requests for Action (RFAs) were recorded while three (3) out twelve (12) of previous RFAs were deemed effective and resolved.

This activity was followed-up by a surveillance audit conducted by TÜV Nord Philippines, Inc. on 20 and

21 November 2023 in which the DFA has been recommended for maintenance of its ISO 9001:2015 certification. The third-party auditors identified zero (0) Nonconformities (NC) in the Department's Quality Management System. The auditors also cited two (2) Good Practices (GP), 8 Opportunities for Improvement (OFI), and 10 Comments (CM).

**Modernized Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System Adoption**

***DFA Recognized as a "Prime Mover in mPhilGEPS Adoption***

In an inter-agency meeting last 18 August 2023, Atty. Dennis Santiago, Executive Director of the Procurement Service of the DBM (PS-DBM), recognized the Department as a "prime mover" in the adoption of the Modernized Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (mPhilGEPS).



*DFA attended the meeting with pioneering agencies for the mPhilGEPS wherein it was recognized as a "prime mover" in mPhilGEPS adoption*

Pursuant to GPPB Resolution No. 04-2022, the PS-

DBM earlier invited DFA to be one of the pioneering National Government Agencies for the adoption of mPhilGEPS, a new system to replace and digitize the current platform for government procurements. Compared to other pioneering agencies, DFA has conducted Department-wide trainings and has been uploading its Annual Procurement Plan through mPhilGEPS since 2020.

### **mPhilGEPS Training**

On 13-14 July 2023, the Department hosted an mPhilGEPS Training for Administrative Officers and Property Officers of Home Office Units and Members of the main Bids and Awards Committee (BAC). The Department invited trainers from the PhilGEPS Group of PS-DBM to share their expertise. This training introduced the different functions of platform towards a fully digital system for government procurement.



*Participants of the mPhilGEPS training at the Bulawagang Elpidio Quirino, DFA*

The training underscored the importance of good procurement planning and addressed the queries on the role of end-user units within the new system. Theory was balanced with praxis in this training as it demonstrated the different modules of the system through a test server. There were also simulations on how to utilize the e-Bidding Facility of mPhilGEPS. This was the largest training on mPhilGEPS at this time.



*Group photograph of participants in the mPhilGEPS training*

### **One-on-one Clinic Session on mPhilGEPS Adoption**



*DFA personnel had hands-on training with mPhilGEPS*

Following through the feedback from the July 2023 training, the BAC Secretariat conducted smaller group sessions with all offices in the Home Office. These sessions were more hands-on to build the end-users' confidence in utilizing relevant modules of mPhilGEPS. These sessions were attended by Administrative Officers, Property Officers, and other interested personnel.

### **DFA Awarded as 2nd Top Government Agency with the Highest Complaints Resolution Rate in 2022**



*CCB Representatives with OCA Officers and Staff of the Client's Concern Unit (Photo courtesy of DFA-OCA)*

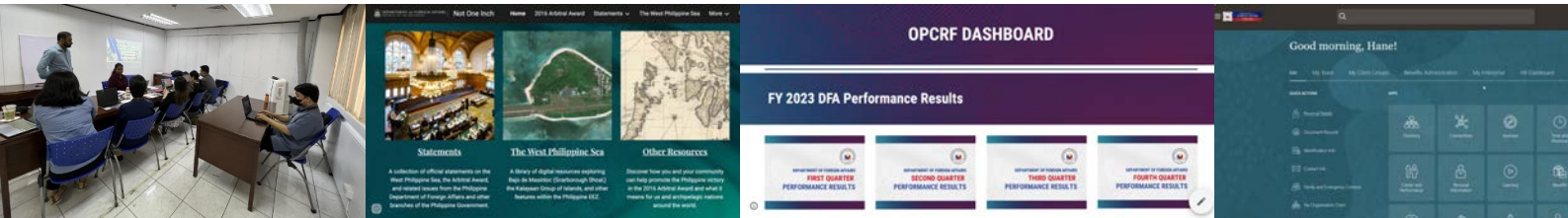
The DFA has once again proven its commitment to excellence in public service by securing the second spot among the government agencies with the highest complaints resolution rate for fiscal year 2022. This impressive achievement, awarded by CSC's Contact Center ng Bayan (CCB), underscores the DFA's dedication to addressing citizen concerns efficiently and effectively, particularly as a result of several key factors, namely digital transformation, enhanced communication, professional training, and transparency.

The rankings of government agencies that have



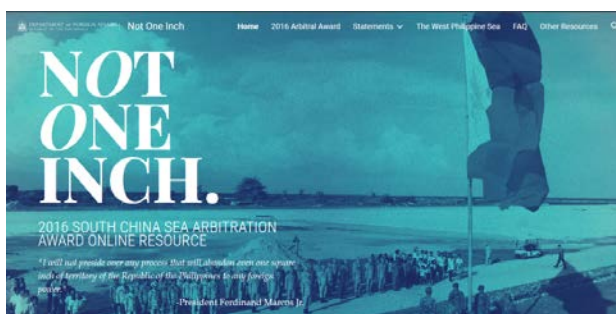
excelled in addressing citizen complaints were made public in December 2022 through the CCB official page. Meanwhile, the awarding of the top ten (10) agencies was held virtually on 27 September 2023 in time for the celebration of 123rd Philippine Civil Service Anniversary. And on 03 October 2023, the certificate of recognition was turned over by representatives from CCB and received by Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Henry S. Bensurto, Jr.





## B. DIGITIZATION EFFORTS

### Launch of Microsite on 2016 Arbitral Award



To mark the 7th anniversary of the Arbitral Award on the South China Sea, the DFA launched on 12 July 2023 the microsite “Not One Inch” on the Award, to provide a central resource for official information and positions on the Award and its contributions to the rule of law and peaceful settlement of disputes through UNCLOS and international law.

To provide accurate information on the 2016 Arbitral Award, the microsite provides links to resources including the material submitted to the Tribunal and made available by the Permanent Court of Arbitration, DFA Statements on the South China Sea Arbitration, the legal and geographic scope of the West Philippine Sea, answers to Frequently Asked Questions, as well as links to Other Resources relevant to the subject.

### Digitization of Office Performance Management System



The Department launched on 20 March 2023 the *Data Driven DFA* Microsite as part of its digitization initiatives specifically on the agency's strategic performance management system. It has been

developed as the main portal in accessing and accomplishing the Office Performance Commitment and Review Form (OPCRF) of each FSP, CO and Home Office Unit. The Microsite also features updates and analyses on the performance targets and performance results of the DFA, as references for heads of posts and offices, planning officers, and the Department as a whole, in strengthening the linkage between budgeting, and targeting and performance monitoring and evaluation.

### Digital Human Resources Management

In support of the Administration's digital transformation initiatives, the Department, through the Human Resources Management Office (HRMO), capitalized on available technologies for continuity of service in spite of the pandemic, and beyond.

Through the Department's *OK HRMO* Microsite, the agency launched and improved more HR-related service microsities and online portals in 2023, including a *Health Insurance Personnel Dashboard* to ensure the prompt enrolment of personnel (and qualified dependents) assigned in the Home Office and in FSPs in its insurance programs. Personnel are now able to access human resource services via QR codes, including requests for (1) Certificate of Leave Credits, (2) Solo Parent Registration, (3) Passport Revalidation, and (4) Local and Global Health Insurance Enrollment, among others.

A total of thirty-eight (38) human resources-related microsities and portals are currently available with corresponding QR Codes that DFA personnel in the Home Office and FSPs can access for various HR-related services.

### Development of Human Capital Management and Payroll System (HCM-PS)

To upgrade the existing Human Resource Integrated System-Payroll Benefits Management Information System (HRIS-PBMIS), the Department



kicked off its flagship project for the procurement of the Human Capital Management and Payroll System (HCM-PS) in 2023. This system, once implemented, will automate and streamline a number of administrative processes, including the update and generation of personnel records and payroll management, among others.



*The Project Plan Signing was held on 04 September 2023, officially launching the project implementation*



*The Project Team Orientation Meeting followed on 05 September 2023 which discussed the work plan for the Project Team composed of personnel from the HRMO, OFMS, OAMSS, and OUA*



*HCM-PS Workshops from 06 to 22 September 2023*

All these digitization efforts are intended to be tied together and integrated into one digital space - the HCM-PS – envisioned to be a one stop-hub for the Department's personnel data management needs, and will include a virtually unlimited, cloud-based storage; and AI-powered chatbot. With this initiative, most of HR-related information will be updated in real-time, thereby resulting in zero backlogs, and shall be accessible to Department

personnel anytime and anywhere.



*Conference Room Pilot (CRP) for Core HR and Payroll Module was held from 13 to 22 November 2023*

### **Utilization of Landbank's Digital Services to Streamline Financial Processes**

In partnership with Landbank of the Philippines, the Department utilizes technology to streamline processes and digitalize. The Landbank's Electronic Modified Disbursement System (eMDS) and weAccess were implemented to enable real-time processing of payments anytime, anywhere. The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and PhilHealth premiums of the employees may be paid through the eMDS. The confirmation of alternate sets of authorizers and reviewers further strengthens fiscal internal controls and ensures continuity of fiscal operations.

Further, the Authentication Services was enrolled to the Landbank Linkbiz Portal. Clients may now pay online for Authentication Services. The portal also improves the backend financial process and reporting of the Department.

### **EDisbursement Microsite**

The Department also launched the eDisbursement microsite in line with the efforts to improve its budget utilization rate and streamline the disbursement process. The eDisbursement microsite ensures that Home Offices will be able to submit the complete documentary requirements for the processing of payments for six (6) common government transactions.

### **Cybersecurity Workshop, 07 December 2023**

The briefing for DFA personnel was conducted by Ms. Linette Mananghaya, Senior Security Solutions Engineer at Sophos, a UK-based company and



worldwide leader and an innovator of advanced cybersecurity solutions that provides advanced cybersecurity solutions, Managed Detection and Response (MDR), and incident response services. The meeting discussed the current measures being undertaken by the Department and individual personnel in ensuring safety from cyber breaches and threats. Discussions revolved around present and future trends of cyber breaches and crimes. Past and future data were compared to demonstrate how cybercrimes have evolved and became more sophisticated.

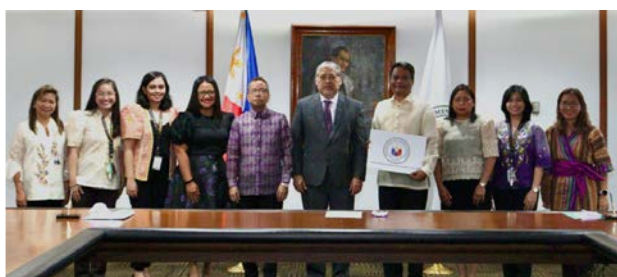




## C. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

### Gender and Development

#### *Adoption of the DFA Six-Year Gender and Development Agenda 2023-2028*



*Secretary Manalo, Undersecretary for Administration and Chairperson of the GAD Focal Point System Executive Committee Antonio A. Morales, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management and Head of the GAD Secretariat Christopher B. Montero, together with the GAD Secretariat and the Participatory Gender Audit consultants after the signing of the DFA GAD Agenda for CYs 2023-2028*

In celebration of National Women’s Month and International Women’s Day 2023, the DFA adopted its new Gender and Development (GAD) Agenda for CY 2023 to 2028, at a signing ceremony led by the Secretary for Foreign Affairs and GAD Focal Point System Agency Head Enrique A. Manalo on 08 March 2023.

The DFA GAD Agenda is the strategic framework and plan on gender mainstreaming, which shall serve as the Department’s basis for identifying and implementing its priority Programs, Activities, and Projects (PAPs) to achieve its GAD goals and outcomes for the 6-year period.

Secretary Manalo reiterated DFA’s full commitment towards a more resilient, responsive, and inclusive foreign service; where women and men equally contribute to and benefit from the achievement of development goals, and fully enjoy their human rights.

The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) also formally endorsed in 2023 the DFA’s GAD Plan and Budget after 5 years since its last endorsement.

#### *Conduct of a Regional Training on Gender and Development for GAD Focal Point Officers in the Home Office, COs and FSPs*



*Regional Training on GAD (from top to bottom) for Home Office and Consular Offices, and ASPAC, MEAA, Americas and Europe Regions*



The Department successfully conducted five (5) runs of Regional Training on Gender and Development for GAD Focal Point Officers (GFPOs) in the Home Office, COs and FSPs.

Spearheaded by DFA-HRMO, the regional trainings are in line with Goal 2 of the DFA GAD Agenda for 2023 to 2028, to establish and strengthen institutional capacities of the GAD Focal Point System (GFPS) in accelerating gender mainstreaming in the Department.

The four-day Regional GAD Training commenced in Manila on 01-04 August 2023 for GFPOs in the Home Office and COs. To further address the understanding of gender and development across regions, successive runs were organized for FSPs in the Asia and the Pacific region (22-25 August 2023), in Middle East and Africa (29 August-01 September 2023), in the Americas (05-08 September 2023), and in Europe (25-28 September 2023). These were hosted by Bangkok PE, Abu Dhabi PE, Mexico PE, and Rome PE, respectively.

The Training provided an excellent opportunity for participants to strengthen their understanding and appreciation of basic GAD concepts, Gender Analysis, Gender-Fair Communication, as well as the adoption of Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting procedures, through discussions led by GAD consultants, Atty. Allen Espino and Ms. Cecilia Fantastico. A module on ATN was also presented by the OUMWA, which highlighted the DFA's role in supporting a gender-sensitive migration policy for Filipino migrant workers.

### **Conduct of Wellness Activities**

As part of the Department's wellness program, DFA-HRMO conducted a total of 167 activities including counseling sessions, project crafting activities, resilience and fitness sessions; and wellness, reintegration and PWD seminars, engaging a total of 1,803 personnel.

### **Ensuring Safety, Promoting Safe Spaces and Promoting Professional Growth**

At its nascent stage, the Department, through its Occupational Safety and Healthy (OSH) Unit was able to achieve a first in 2023 - the BOSH Training for Safety Officers where 240 personnel from the Home Office, COs and FSPs were trained and certified as Safety Officers I. Through these

sessions, personnel were educated on the risks and the means to eliminate such risks for a safer working environment.

The Department also maintained its commitment to creating a Safe Space for personnel through efforts aimed at eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace through the regular conduct of Committee on Decorum Investigations (CODI). And to support this initiative, the DFA also launched an online course on Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention, which will be rolled out to all Department personnel in 2024.

The DFA, through HRMO, also undertook Administrative Inspection/Visits to five (5) COs and seven (7) FSPs aimed at guiding personnel in their compliance with the relevant rules and regulations governing the Service and bridge operational deficiencies where applicable, as well as learn from their best practices.

The DFA further facilitated the professional and career development of at least 2,629 personnel through their participation in training programs and courses offered in the Department's Learning Management System (LMS) platform; Competency-based workshops; partnership with government and private learning and development institutions (LDIs); and FSI. For the first time since 2020, DFA conducted in October 2023 a two-day in-person Customer Service Workshop that benefitted twenty-three (23) personnel from newly-opened CO Zambales, and CO San Fernando Pampanga; and the Temporary Off-site Passport Service in Olongapo.

DFA also granted funding assistance sourced from the Scholarship Fund to 32 personnel, who pursued both degree and non-degree programs in local and international educational institutions.

It continued its partnership with De La Salle University (DLSU), Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU), and Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) to support the continuing education of its personnel.



## Engagements with Philippine Honorary Consular Officers

### **Conduct of Virtual Regional Consultation Meetings with Philippine Honorary Consular Officers**

DFA-HRMO, through the Honorary Consuls Unit (HCU) of the Honorary Consuls and Service Attachés Division (HCSAD) conducted successful virtual Regional Consultation Meetings (RCM) among the Philippine honorary consular officers in the Middle Eastern and African regions (November 2022), the European region (March 2023), and the American, Asian, and Pacific regions (December 2023).

Under the theme “Philippine Honorary Consuls: First Responders at a time of Global Challenges”, the RCMs highlighted the critical role of honorary consular officers as vital cogs in the advancement of Philippine foreign policy, amidst the rapidly changing global landscape.

The RCMs also provided a unique platform to update our honorary consular officers on developments involving the three pillars of Philippine foreign policy, particularly in the areas of economic diplomacy, consular services, assistance to nationals, and compliance with administrative and fiscal requirements.

The honorary consuls were provided with useful insights and perspectives on the current and emerging realities they face on matters relating to their functions, as well as the proposed ways forward to improve Philippine presence and bilateral relations in their respective areas and countries.



*DFA resource speakers and Philippine Honorary Consular Officers engage in the virtual regional consultation meeting*

### **Visit of Philippine Honorary Consular Officers**

In 2023, there were nine (9) Honorary Consular Officers from Detroit, Michigan; Brno, Czech Republic; Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire; Aleppo, Syria; Accra, Ghana; Lagos, Nigeria; Minsk, Belarus; and Mumbai, India who visited and met with various officials of the Department.



*Visiting Philippine Honorary Consular Officers from Brno, Czech Republic; Mumbai, India; Aleppo, Syria; and Lagos, Nigeria*

### **Meetings with Partner Agency Representatives**



*Meetings with officials from PNP, PhilHealth and DMW*

As part of the Department's commitment to provide support to Philippine FSPs with Partner Agency representatives, the DFA, through the the Service Attaches Unit (SAU) of HRMO-HCSAD, successfully conducted meetings with officials from PhilHealth, PNP, Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), NBI and DMW. The agenda for the meetings included administrative support for the establishment and deployment of Partner Agency representatives at FSPs, in accordance with the Joint Circular 01-2015 (Guidelines on the Assignment of Representatives of Partner Agencies to Philippine Foreign Service Posts) and the Department's existing rules and regulations.

HRMO-HCSAD-SAU assisted in the establishment and reopening of Partner Agencies' overseas offices such as DTI-PTIC in Tel Aviv, MWO in Prague and Bangkok, and the re-establishment of the Office of the Philippine Defense and Armed Forces Attaché in London. The Unit facilitated the deployment/assignment of more than 120





personnel of Partner Agency representatives to various FSPs and conducted consultation/meetings with government agencies with mandates for deployment to FSPs like NBI and PhilHealth.

relocate to Double Dragon, Pasay City in June 2024.

### **Conduct of Coordination and Consultative Monthly Meetings Among Administrative Officers in the Home Office**



*Meeting of Administrative Officers with members of the project management team and transition team with Assistant Secretaries from OAMSS, OFMS and HRMO*

In 2023, HRMO's Administrative Unit spearheaded the conduct of twelve (12) Home Office Administrative Officers' monthly meetings as a platform for consultations and collaboration on key administrative matters among and between offices in the Home Office. Special or extraordinary meetings were likewise conducted as a way of expeditiously addressing matters and issues of mutual concern, such as, but not limited to the retrofitting of the existing Home Office and the eventual transfer of the Department to its temporary headquarters.

### **Review of Foreign Service Allowances**

The Department, in coordination with the DBM, is currently reviewing the foreign service allowances which was last adjusted in 2013. The Department is in active engagement with the DBM to have a new Executive Order with the updated rates and indices approved by the second quarter of 2024. This undertaking is essential in ensuring that Philippine foreign service personnel can effectively represent the country with distinction and dignity.

### **Relocation to the Temporary DFA Headquarters**

The Department has successfully secured the multi-year funding for the retrofitting project and the lease of a temporary office space while the DFA Headquarters in 2330 Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City is undergoing retrofitting. The Department is set to



## D. 125TH DFA FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY



*DFA officials and personnel, led by Secretary Manalo with Executive Secretary Lucas P. Bersamin, former President and current Deputy Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Chair of the House Committee for Foreign Affairs Rep. Maria Rachel J. Arenas, other high-ranking government officials, and descendants of the Department's founding chief – the revolutionary hero Apolinario Mabini, during the celebration of the DFA's 125th Founding Anniversary*

The DFA marked its 125th founding anniversary on 19 July 2023 in a celebration hosted by Malacañan Palace at the fabled Heroes Hall. The event was graced by the presence of President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr., Executive Secretary Lucas P. Bersamin, former President and current Deputy Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Chair of the House Committee for Foreign Affairs Rep. Maria Rachel J. Arenas, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, other high-ranking government officials, and descendants of the Department's founding chief – the revolutionary hero Apolinario Mabini.

President Marcos hailed the DFA for its professionalism and its quiet yet effective diplomacy, underscoring in particular the skill and efforts of the career foreign service corps. As the Chief Architect of Philippine foreign policy, the President cited the DFA's valuable contributions to the success of his international engagements and to helping steer the country through a complicated global political landscape.



*Secretary Manalo accompanying President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. during the 125th DFA Founding Anniversary, and the President during his remarks commemorating the occasion*



In his remarks, Secretary Manalo lauded DFA colleagues for keeping alive the agency's revolutionary spirit, driven forward by patriotism, passion, and national pride. The Secretary emphasized the Department's determination to innovate and push frontiers across the wide breadth and depth of its mandate – from digitizing frontline consular services, to providing critical assistance to overseas Filipinos, to projecting a responsible, engaged, and peace-oriented Philippine brand of diplomacy.

honorees from the DFA in recognition of exceptional and distinguished accomplishments.

The DFA was founded on 23 June 1898 as one of the initial four Departments at the very dawn of the first Philippine Republic. Apolinario Mabini was appointed by President Emilio Aguinaldo to lead what was then known as the Department of Foreign Relations, Marine, and Commerce. Today, the DFA is guided by the Constitutional mandate of an independent foreign policy, anchored on the three pillars of the preservation and enhancement of national security, the promotion and attainment of economic security, and the protection of the welfare and interests of Filipinos overseas.



*Secretary Manalo delivers his remarks during the 125th DFA Founding Anniversary*

"The DFA can truly claim that its women and men have built indelible legacies that every Filipino can be proud of", said Secretary Manalo, who further exhorted the foreign service corps to continue answering the call of duty and selfless service to the nation.



*Secretary Manalo and Executive Secretary Lucas P. Bersamin with the Gawad Mabini awardees during the 125th DFA Founding Anniversary*

The celebration was also highlighted by the conferment of a number of Departmental and Presidential awards, including the prestigious Gawad Mabini, which for this year was given to four





## D. FINANCIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Restoration of the DFA Budget for FY 2024 to its Regular Level

As part of the budget preparation, the Department conducted a series of internal technical budget hearings and meetings to brief the different Offices on the 2024 DFA budget process. This led to a 19.1% increase in the DFA budget amounting to PHP 3.913 billion for FY 2024. Aside from the Regular Appropriations, the Department also secured Congressional Initiatives for special projects and augmentation for operational needs of select offices and foreign service posts.



*Budget Hearing for FY 2024 at the House of Representatives*

### Implementation of the One-Time Cleansing of Property, Plant, and Equipment Accounts

The Department has undertaken the One-Time Cleansing of Property, Plant, and Equipment (PPE) accounts in order to address the unreliability of the Department's financial statements and in accordance with COA audit recommendation. The discrepancy in the Department's financial statements has been the subject of COA adverse findings from 2015 to 2022. The Department, in coordination with COA, conducted the actual inventory count of PPE in the Home Office, DFA-Aseana, DFA-Mindanao, pilot FSPs, and COs.



*Preparatory Meeting with DFA Offices on the FY 2024 budget*



*Technical Budget Hearing with DBM*



*Budget Hearing Consultation with Senator Loren Legarda*



*PPE Inventory Cleansing at Beijing PE, Shanghai PE, Hong Kong PCG, Macau PCG and Guangzhou PCG*



### **Other Financial Accomplishments**

1. 99.44% utilization of the Notice of Cash Allocation (NCA) amounting to PHP 10.9 billion. The NCA is the cash authority issued by DBM to cover the cash requirements of the government agencies.
2. Remittance of prior years' GSIS premiums amounting to PHP 5.3 million.
3. Reconciliation of Notice of Discrepancies for Taxable Year 2019 of Expanded Withholding Tax (EWT) and Withholding Tax on Compensation (WTC) amounting to PHP 6.7 billion and PHP 542 million.
4. Adjustment of more than PHP 100 million Accounts Payables of Foreign Service Posts from prior years.
5. Adjustment of PHP 110 million Other Payables pertaining to International Commitment Fund (ICF) of FSPs equivalent to 50% of the total balance.
6. Liquidation of 90% of long outstanding Cash Advances for the Living Quarters Allowance (LQA) of inactive personnel in the amount of PHP 12.9 million.
7. Reclassification of 1st Batch of Due from Officers and Employees Account of inactive personnel amounting to PHP 25 million.
8. Reconciliation of abnormal balances of cash accounts of Finance Officers and Collecting Officers ranging from the years 1980 to 2014.
9. Adjustment of 281 out of 288 (98%) various Semi-expendable accounts of Consular Offices to the corresponding expense account.



# ANNEXES





## ANNEX A: NEW OVERSEAS VOTER REGISTRANTS

**Number of New OV Registrants for the Period 01 January to 31 December 2023** (as of data released by COMELEC on 01 February 2024)

Geographic Region	Certification		Registration		Reactivation		Sub-Total		Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Asia Pacific	9,829	5,127	7,615	2,506	3,245	847	20,689	8,480	<b>29,169</b>
Europe	4,210	2,798	5,256	2,410	2,803	1,340	12,269	6,548	<b>18,817</b>
Middle East and Africa	11,358	5,328	5,943	2,214	3,735	1,928	21,036	9,470	<b>30,506</b>
North and Latin Americas	6,035	5,262	16,200	9,643	1,658	1,093	23,893	15,998	<b>39,891</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31,432</b>	<b>18,515</b>	<b>35,014</b>	<b>16,773</b>	<b>11,441</b>	<b>5,208</b>	<b>77,887</b>	<b>40,496</b>	<b>118,383</b>

*\*Based on the COMELEC's OV database as of 15 January 2025 RERB Hearing*

*\*Excluded is the number of approved applications of London PE's RERB for the 15 January 2024 Hearing*



## ANNEX B: PASSPORT-ON-WHEELS SERVICES SITES

No.	Date	Sites	No. of Expected Applicants	No. of Applicants Processed
1	25-26 January 2023	Tagbilaran City, Bohol	1,441	1,434
2	07-08 February 2023	Lian, Batangas	434	431
3	16 February 2023	COA PhilGASEA	280	260
4	22 February 2023	Bacoor, Cavite	327	321
5	23 February 2023	Antipolo City, Rizal	354	345
6	27-28 February 2023	1st District of Cavite	502	497
7	07-09 March 2023	Province of Camarines Norte	1,919	1,885
8	14-15 March 2023	Masinloc, Zambales	1,024	1,013
9	21-23 March 2023	Province of Tarlac	1,550	1,546
10	28-29 March 2023	Philippine Army	513	489
11	14 April 2023	Bacoor, Cavite	452	447
12	17 April 2023	NDCP	107	106
13	19 April 2023	Norzagaray, Bulacan	641	631
14	20 April 2023	San Miguel, Bulacan	703	694
15	25 April 2023	Tingloy, Batangas	77	77
16	27 April 2023	Lobo, Batangas	400	382
17	03 May 2023	Rizal, Nueva Ecija	428	428
18	04 May 2023	Bongabon, Nueva Ecija	392	391
19	09 May 2023	Tagudin, Ilocos Sur	387	386
20	10-11 May 2023	Province of Ilocos Sur	402	395
21	16 May 2023	Atok, Benguet	457	379



No.	Date	Sites	No. of Expected Applicants	No. of Applicants Processed
22	17 May 2023	La Trinidad, Benguet	614	553
23	18 May 2023	Itoyon, Benguet	600	493
24	29 May 2023	Parañaque City	128	127
25	30-31 May 2023	Imus, Cavite	836	825
26	01 June 2023	House of Representatives	425	398
27	14-15 June 2023	Real, Quezon	313	299
28	21-23 June 2023	Province of Camarines Sur	2,180	2,143
29	26-27 June 2023	Naic, Cavite	820	815
30	30 June 2023	Department of Budget and Management	155	153
31	05 July 2023	Presidential Communications Office	155	153
32	07 July 2023	Province of Ilocos Sur	457	455
33	17 July 2023	National Council on Disability Affairs	75	74
34	19-20 July 2023	Province of Biliran	1,574	948
35	24 July 2023	Kalibo, Aklan	721	713
36	25-26 July 2023	Province of Aklan	1,403	1,393
37	04 August 2023	1st District of Quezon City	118	116
38	09 August 2023	Llanera, Nueva Ecija	537	536
39	10 August 2023	General Tinio, Nueva Ecija	632	626
40	15 August 2023	Navotas City	386	383
41	23 August 2023	Sto. Tomas, Batangas	553	549
42	25 August 2023	PNP Headquarters	292	276
43	29 August 29 - 01 September 2023	Province of Bohol	3,755	3,732





No.	Date	Sites	No. of Expected Applicants	No. of Applicants Processed
44	04 September 2023	Makati City	364	353
45	05 September 2023	Department of Social Welfare and Development	133	121
46	07 September 2023	Sta. Maria, Bulacan	566	561
47	08 September 2023	Baliwag, Bulacan	423	420
48	12 September 2023	Magallanes, Cavite	408	404
49	13 September 2023	Maragondon, Cavite	622	618
50	14 September 2023	Tanza, Cavite	556	553
51	15 September 2023	Obando, Bulacan	431	424
52	18 September 2023	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	417	408
53	19 September 2023	San Juan City	390	372
54	25 September 2023	Coast Guard Education Training and Doctrine Command	168	160
55	27 September 2023	San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan	449	426
56	29 September 2023	Province of Laguna	714	697
57	02 October 2023	Department of Public Works and Highways	218	215
58	07 October 2023	Quezon City (Tingog Party List)	54	54
59	09-10 October 2023	Taguig City	732	729
60	12 October 2023	Rosales, Pangasinan	598	584
61	13 October 2023	Dinalupihan, Bataan	672	649
62	16 October 2023	Imus, Cavite	693	677
63	17 October 2023	Bureau of Internal Revenue	231	214
64	17 October 2023	Procurement Service - DBM	28	28
65	19-20 October 2023	Odiongan, Romblon	1,400	1,297



No.	Date	Sites	No. of Expected Applicants	No. of Applicants Processed
66	24-25 October 2023	Basco, Batanes	565	544
67	30 October 2023	UNTV	120	63
68	08 November 2023	Province of Cavite	218	215
69	13 November 2023	Plaridel, Bulacan	317	316
70	14 November 2023	Pandi, Bulacan	439	436
71	15-18 November 2023	3rd District Pangasinan	519	513
72	19-21 November 2023	ACT-CIS Partylist - Cauayan, Isabela	849	568
73	22 November 2023	Naic, Cavite	605	602
74	23 November 2023	Alfonso, Cavite	438	433
75	24-25 November 2023	Tuy, Batangas	620	610
76	01 December 2023	Bacoor City, Cavite	178	176
77	02 December 2023	PNP Forensic Group	131	127
78	05 December 2023	Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro	629	608
79	06 December 2023	Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro	700	693
80	07 December 2023	Province of Oriental Mindoro	635	635
81	11 December 2023	San Luis, Aurora	564	561
82	12 December 2023	Meycauayan, Bulacan	538	527
83	14 December 2023	Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro	468	452
84	15 December 2023	Roxas, Oriental Mindoro	654	630
85	19 December 2023	Lupao, Nueva Ecija	489	487
<i>Serbisyo Fair</i>				
86	26-27 August 2023	Biliran	569	569
87	23-24 September 2023	Ilocos Norte	263	263



No.	Date	Sites	No. of Expected Applicants	No. of Applicants Processed
88	23-24 September 2023	Camarines Sur	500	500
89	23-24 September 2023	Leyte	291	291
90	23-24 September 2023	Davao	500	246
91	04-05 November 2023	Sta. Cruz, Laguna	444	444
92	11-12 November 2023	Bukidnon	600	481
93	25-26 November 2023	Isabela	400	295
94	02-03 December 2023	OPs Day Malacanang	391	462
95	09-10 December 2023	Iloilo	400	364
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>53,820</b>	<b>51,372</b>





## ANNEX C: VISA ISSUANCES IN 2023

### Top Ten (10) Issuing Posts

(as of 31 December 2023)

Rank	Post	Visa Issued
1	Guangzhou PCG	37,124
2	Shanghai PCG	36,540
3	Beijing PE	29,867
4	Chongqing PCG	15,121
5	New Delhi PE - Chennai PHC	8,888

Rank	Post	Visa Issued
6	New Delhi PE	7,691
7	Xiamen PCG	7,179
8	New Delhi PE - Mumbai PHC	6,805
9	Dubai PCG	6,434
10	Abuja PE	3,161

### Operations Section

9(e)	5,028
9(f)	60
9(b)	21
9(c)	2,161
9(a)	3,266

47(a)(2)	269
<b>Total Number of Foreign Nationals Issued Fax Authorities</b>	<b>10,805</b>
9(e) Renewal – visas issued in Manila	3,120
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>13,925</b>

### Other Accomplishments

Blacklisting of Foreign Nationals	229
Lifting from the Blacklist	7
Visa Related Policies (FSC, D.O., Circulars, others)	302
Certified Business Organizations (Makati Business Club, PCCI and Philexport)	219
Other Business Organizations per approved memo from OUA	4
APEC Member Countries	52

APEC Business Travel Card Team (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Brisbane, Australia)	4
Applicants	221
Number of Approved Foreign Applications	200,283
Cards Issued	290
Cleared foreign nationals through ABTC Look-Out LOL	81,872
Local ABTC application approved	267



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