

**COUNTRY STATEMENT
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
by
Labor Secretary ARTURO D. BRION**

GRATITUDE AND FAIRNESS

The Philippines congratulates and thanks the IOM and its leadership for another fruitful year leading to this successful 94th Annual Conference.

We particularly thank the organization for the assistance and cooperation it has extended to my country.

For almost 40 years, we have had a system for the organized and regulated deployment of our citizens who wish to work overseas. Through these years, we have encountered the various phases of contract migration, from the pre-deployment stage up to the return of our workers, and the important in-between period when our workers encounter the hazards and the negative side of migration.

Through most of these years, the IOM, particularly the present leadership, has been there. Hence, our thanks to the Director-General and the IOM staff who were there with us as we struggled through the dislocations of natural calamities and our evacuation efforts from war-stricken worksites, among others.

This year, with the assistance of the IOM, we launched several new initiatives, among them our new National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers ("Reintegration Center") and our Migration Library that we envision, with the IOM's active help, to be the migration information resource center in our part of the world.

The Reintegration Center is our first effort of putting under one roof and in an organized and systematic way our efforts to address the various needs at the Philippine end of our workers while still overseas and as they return to the Philippines.

It has a personal reintegration component through which we help the overseas workers' families through organized family circles and through which we assist the workers themselves upon their return to the

Philippines through retraining for redeployment overseas or through job search facilitation for local employment. Local employment backed up by previous overseas experience will hopefully provide us brain gain while the family circle system is part of our efforts to address the heavy social costs of migration.

The Center has a community reintegration component that serves as a hub for linking the overseas workers with his or her local community. This is where we link the NGOs with the overseas Filipinos for shared effort in helping these workers. Our most successful initiative yet is in the donation of classrooms by overseas workers for their local communities.

Lastly, we have the Center's economic reintegration component through which we assist the overseas worker's personal economic situation. This is where we have addressed, with some measure of success already, the problem of remittances that has netted us at least a tenth of our GNP. This is where we are now addressing the "rags to riches to rags" syndrome that we see in some of our overseas workers as they return home for good after years of toiling overseas.

All these are work-in-progress that we dare to mention now because these are some of the experiences we shall gladly share with the international community in the days to come as all of us, in one way or another, become migration communities.

We mention these too to call the attention of the international community to a reality we are now experiencing as we consciously relate the benefits of migration to our national development. We have seen that our own development needs the very same workers who are leaving for overseas jobs. To allow us to continue sharing our workers with the world and for all of us to benefit from their labors, we believe that human resources development should be a responsibility shared with the destination countries if only AS A MEASURE OF FAIRNESS.

Lastly and to return to where this statement started, I mention our Reintegration Center to render this same measure of fairness and to reiterate our gratitude to the IOM and its leadership who had been there with willingly given help when we started our national reintegration efforts.

Thank you very much for your attention. We hope to see you all in Manila at the 2nd Global Forum for Migration and Development in October 2008 where we can share more of our valuable migration lessons and experiences with one another.