



Basuguan ng Pilipinas

Embassy of the Philippines

The Hague

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

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PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO THE NETHERLANDS

Parola, December 2007

It is my pleasure and honor to address - in this message - all the Board members, volunteers, friends and supporters of the Philippine Seafarer Assistance Program (PSAP), all the people behind PAROLA, and all the readers of PAROLA who are mostly, but not limited to, the Filipino seafarers.

First of all, I wish to congratulate PSAP for its continued work in actively and successfully advocating, promoting and ensuring the welfare of seafarers all over the world.

I am aware that, last July 2007 in Brussels, PSAP pushed for the interests of seafarers and their families during the *Global Forum for Migration and Development*; in September in Singapore, PSAP assisted the *International Committee on Seafarers Welfare (ICSW)* in launching a seafarers' welfare program for South East Asia; and in Washington DC last November, PSAP, upon the invitation of the World Bank, made a presentation on the challenges of mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in the maritime transport sector.

It pleases me to be informed that the PSAP primer entitled *A Seafarers' Primer on the ILO Maritime Labor Convention* received ILO and ICSW endorsement and has even been translated to Russian. I remember endorsing this then-newly-published Primer myself at the 2006 PSAP Christmas Party and it is satisfying to know that, now, many welfare organizations and church-based missions are involved in its dissemination as a useful information material.

I fully support the above activities of the PSAP and wish to encourage it to continue to strive for safer, healthier and richer lives for seafarers. It is without doubt that the success of PSAP in its endeavors will reap benefits for Filipino seafarers all over the world.

I also wish to congratulate PSAP for its very informative website that allows for faster communication of updates and/or information of interest to the seafaring community.

Talking of effective communication, I commend all the people that make possible the publication of PAROLA, the PSAP newsletter that truly engrosses its readers with relevant information on seafaring policies/trends, legal advice, outreach activities, personal stories and jokes submitted by Filipino seafarers. It impresses me that PAROLA reaches more than 10,000 Filipino seafarers and families and, for the coming year, I can clearly envision it to be reaching more and more people.

To the Filipino seafarers, *Mabuhay po kayong lahat!* I am truly proud of the fact that Filipino seafarers are known for their professionalism, adaptability, resiliency and a generally happy disposition in life.


It also makes me proud to know that due to the shortage of officers in the world's merchant fleets, the global shipping industry is now looking towards the Philippines as the most promising source of quality officers. I encourage all of you - Filipino seafarers - to grab this opportunity not only for your own personal and professional growth but also for the immense pride it will bring our country.

I know that it is always difficult to be away from home and family, especially during occasions such as Christmas and New Year. It could help us, however, to be reminded that Christmas is less about the gifts or the lights or the food and merriment back home that we may miss; it is more about the birth of Our Savior Jesus Christ. Through Him, you can be assured of your and your family's safety and well-being and thus, despite the distance and physical separation from loved ones, still have peace of mind and a meaningful and happy Christmas.

My Christmas offering to you, my *kababayans* at sea, is prayers. I am with you in praying for your continued employment, good health, healthy and happy children, contented family and a safe sailing throughout.

Here's wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

Mabuhay po kayong Lahat!



ROMEEO A. ARGUELLES
Ambassador