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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

**Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the**

53rd Commonwealth  
Parliamentary Conference,  
India and to the Republic of  
the Philippines

24 September-5 October 2007

March 2008  
Canberra

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ISBN 978-0-642-79031-6



# Contents

Membership of the Delegation.....	v
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Bilateral delegation to the Philippines .....	1
Acknowledgments .....	3
<b>Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Introduction .....	5
Business of the Conference .....	6
Concluding Comment.....	9
<b>Bilateral visit to the Philippines .....</b>	<b>11</b>
The Philippines at a glance .....	11
Background .....	12
Recent developments .....	14
The Muslim minority in the southern Philippines .....	15
Congress and the Executive .....	15
Economic overview .....	15
Bilateral relations between Australia and the Philippines .....	16
The Delegation's program .....	19
Conclusions .....	27
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>29</b>
Address by Rt Hon Don McKinnon, Commonwealth Secretary-General, and Address by Dr William F. Shija, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, to the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.....	29

<b>Appendix B .....</b>	<b>45</b>
Session details and workshop and plenary reports from the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.....	45
<b>Appendix C .....</b>	<b>87</b>
Delegation Program, Philippines, 30 September-5 October 2007.....	87



## Membership of the Delegation

**Leader**            Hon Senator Alan Ferguson, President of the Senate

**Deputy Leader**   Harry Jenkins MP (Australian Labor Party)  
Member for Scullin (Victoria)

**Members**            Senator the Hon Sandy Macdonald (The Nationals)  
Senator for New South Wales

Senator Linda Kirk (Australian Labor Party)  
Senator for South Australia

**Secretary**            Mr Richard Selth  
Table Office, House of Representatives

**CPA Regional  
Secretary**            Mr Andres Lomp

The Delegation was accompanied by Mrs Anne Ferguson.



## Introduction

- 1.1 This report is in two parts. Chapter 2 reports on the attendance of a delegation from the Parliament of Australia at the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in New Delhi, India, from 21 to 29 September 2007. Chapter 3 presents the activities and observations of the Delegation's visit to the Philippines from 1 to 6 October 2007. The membership of the Delegation is listed at p. v of this report and the Delegation's program is included as Appendix C.
- 1.2 The 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was held in New Delhi, India from 21 to 29 September 2007. The conference was hosted by the Indian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).
- 1.3 The theme of the conference – Delivering Democracy and Sustainable Development – pointed to challenges that many nations and parliaments face. The conference plenary and workshop sessions provided insights and guidance for individual parliamentarians and parliamentary institutions on a range of topics and issues relevant to the theme of the conference.
- 1.4 The delegation was pleased to represent the Australian Parliament at the conference.

## **Bilateral delegation to the Philippines**

### **Aims and objectives of the Delegation**

- 1.5 The Delegation agreed on the following aims and objectives, which were formulated with advice from the Parliamentary Library and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade:

- Renew contacts with the Philippines' legislature and explore further avenues for dialogue and cooperation;
- Gain an enhanced understanding of recent political developments;
- Review the processes of economic development, reform and liberalisation and assess opportunities for further growth and foreign investment ;
- Explore Philippines views (as a member of ASEAN and – with Australia – of the ASEAN Regional Forum) on the effectiveness of ASEAN in promoting regional economic cooperation and cooperation on regional security issues;
- Gain an enhanced appreciation of national and regional efforts to deal with transnational issues, including terrorism, narcotics, unauthorised people movements and health issues;
- Review the progress of Australia's development cooperation programs;
- Explore avenues for further trade and investment between Australia and the Philippines;
- Review the approach of the Philippines to sustainable development, climate change and other environmental issues.

## Overview

- 1.6 The aims and objectives of the Delegation were clearly met. In a busy and varied program Delegation members had the opportunity to inform themselves of developments in the Philippines in a range of areas, and to explore the possibilities for developing further the existing links between the two countries. Members welcomed the opportunity to meet senior members of the congress and government.
- 1.7 The visit was interesting and informative, providing the opportunity to see the practical results of Australian assistance at the level of individual communities. The Delegation also appreciated the opportunity to meet members of local communities and to hear of their specific experiences and perspectives in relation to issues which were also the subject of official briefings.
- 1.8 The Delegation examined very keenly the opportunities for greater Australian trade and investment links with the Philippines. There is a great deal of goodwill. The Delegation believes that there are significant areas for possible investment or joint ventures that are worth exploring.

## Acknowledgments

- 1.9 The Delegation wishes to express its appreciation of the efforts of all those who contributed to the success of its visit. In particular, the Delegation wishes to acknowledge the following contributions:

### Canberra

- 1.10 The Delegation received oral and written briefings from officers of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of the Parliamentary Library prior to its departure. The Delegation wishes to record its thanks to all staff who contributed to these briefings and assisted with administrative arrangements for the visit.
- 1.11 The Delegation wishes to thank the staff of the Parliamentary Relations Office, in particular Ms Lyn Witheridge, for their administrative assistance prior to departure.

### India

- 1.12 The Delegation wishes to thank H.E. Mr John McCarthy, AO, Australian High Commissioner to India, and other High Commission staff, for their valuable initial briefing and for their assistance during the period of the Delegation's visit.
- 1.13 The Delegation wishes to record its appreciation of the work of the Honourable Somnath Chatterjee, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, and of the many staff of the Lok Sabha who contributed to the successful organisation of the CPA conference.

### Philippines

- 1.14 The Delegation wishes to thank H.E. Mr Tony Hely, Australian Ambassador to the Philippines, and other Embassy staff for their assistance throughout the period of the visit. A comprehensive briefing provided by Embassy staff at the commencement of the visit was of great value in updating the Delegation on the current social, political and economic situation in the country. Mr Steve Scott and Mr Andrei Seeto accompanied the Delegation during its time in Manila, giving informed and focused advice and providing valuable administrative support.
- 1.15 The Delegation wishes to record its appreciation of the hospitality and courtesy extended to it by the Senate of the Philippines, His Excellency Senator Manny Villar, President of the Senate, His Excellency Mr Jose de Venecia Jr, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and other Senators

and Members of the House of Representatives during the Delegation's visit. The Delegation thanks them for the warmth of their welcome and for the opportunity to discuss matters of mutual interest and to confirm the good relations between Australia and Philippines.

- 1.16 The Delegation also wishes to thank senior representatives of the Philippines Government from a range of portfolios who made themselves available for meetings with the Delegation.
- 1.17 The Delegation thanks the Governor of Bohol, Hon Erico Aumentado, for his hospitality and for the assistance provided by local officials in the province during the Delegation's visit.
- 1.18 The Delegation wishes to record its thanks to officers of the Senate of the Philippines for the excellent administrative support provided to the Delegation during the visit to the Philippines, and for their assistance on a range of matters. In particular, the Delegation thanks Director-General Mrs Carmen Arceño, Mr Cesar de Chavez and other staff of the Office of International Relations and Protocol for their invaluable advice and assistance.

# Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

## Introduction

- 2.1 The 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was held in New Delhi, India from 21 to 29 September 2007. The conference was hosted by the Parliament of India and led by the Hon Somnath Chatterjee, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).
- 2.2 The CPA is an association of Commonwealth parliamentarians. The aims of the Association are to promote knowledge and understanding about parliamentary democracy and respect for the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms, irrespective of gender, race, religion or culture.
- 2.3 The CPA is composed of branches formed in parliaments and legislatures in Commonwealth countries which subscribe to parliamentary democracy. There are over 170 branches at national, state, territory and provincial levels in 52 Commonwealth countries, representing approximately 17,000 members. Branches are grouped geographically into nine regions: Africa, Asia, Australia, British Islands and Mediterranean, Canada, Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic, Pacific, and South-East Asia.
- 2.4 More than 700 delegates, observers and officials from member parliaments attended the conference. The Commonwealth of Australia Branch of the CPA was represented by a parliamentary delegation consisting of three Senators and one Member of the House of Representatives, led by the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon Alan Ferguson (see p. v for a list of Delegation members). In addition, twelve delegates attended from other Australian parliaments.
- 2.5 The theme of the Conference was 'Delivering Democracy and Sustainable Development'. Members attending the conference argued that the public

must be sensitised to the need for measures to reduce poverty, enhance respect for the rights of women, minimize the effects of pollution on the global environment and climate, including global water supplies, and resolve such pressing issues as human trafficking.

2.6 The conference encompassed a number of components and associated activities. These were:

- meetings of the Executive Committee of the CPA;
- three plenary sessions and six workshops;
- the annual general assembly of the CPA;
- meetings of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee and of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians;
- meetings of regional groups of the CPA;
- the 27th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference of members from small countries; and
- the 44th General Meeting of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table, comprising parliamentary officials.

2.7 In addition, many members participated in the post-conference tour to the historic city of Agra on 29 September 2007, which included visits to Fatehpur Sikri, the Taj Mahal and the Agra Fort. The Hon Chaudhary Sukhram Singh Yadav, Chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council, and the Hon Sukhadeo Rajbhar, Speaker of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly, hosted lunch for delegates.

## **Business of the Conference**

### **Opening ceremonies and speeches**

2.8 The official opening of the conference on Tuesday, 25 September 2007, featured traditional Indian dances from different parts of the country.

2.9 The President of the CPA and Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Hon Somnath Chatterjee, read a message of goodwill from the Patron of the Association, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth.

2.10 The guest of honour at the opening, Her Excellency, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, President of India, formally welcomed Conference participants and officially opened the Conference.

- 2.11 The business of the conference commenced with addresses from the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, the Rt Hon Don McKinnon, and the Secretary-General of the CPA, Dr William Shija. The text of these speeches is at Appendix A.
- 2.12 Mr McKinnon, in his sixth and last address to the CPA as Commonwealth Secretary-General, discussed two themes: democracy, specifically the role of parliaments, and what he referred to as the 'close cousin' of democracy, development. He said that parliaments are at the core of the practice of democracy but are without the institutional machinery and support of the executive. They need to be given the means and the freedoms to operate effectively. He also said that democratic government means peace and security, which give rise to many benefits, including good governance, growth and development.
- 2.13 Dr Shija reported on the activities of the CPA for the past year, and thanked and congratulated the Indian Branch of the CPA for the arrangements put in place for the conference. He noted that climate change and global warming was one of the themes of the conference and referred to the climate-related disasters experienced by a number of Commonwealth countries. He also congratulated the large number of member countries which had enjoyed peaceful elections in the last year.

## Plenary and workshop sessions

- 2.14 The principal business part of the conference comprised six workshops and three plenary sessions with the following topics:
- Workshop A: Climate change and global warming: Policy issues and solutions;
  - Workshop B: Global water and energy use - Towards sustainable development;
  - Workshop C: Balancing economic development and environmental protection;
  - Workshop D: Parliamentary practice and procedure: Need for reforms to secure greater executive accountability;
  - Workshop E: The role, rights and responsibilities of the Opposition;
  - Workshop F: Strengthening financial scrutiny;
  - Gender-related plenary session: The role of parliamentarians in raising awareness of and curbing human trafficking;
  - Host branch plenary session: Right to recall as a strategy for enforcing greater accountability of parliaments of the people;

- Final plenary session: Benchmarks for democratic legislatures.
- 2.15 The session arrangements and program, including details of lead speakers, are at Appendix B. For each workshop up to four panellists spoke for 10 minutes each followed by contributions from the floor of 5 minutes each. The plenary sessions followed a similar format.
- 2.16 Members of the Commonwealth of Australia Branch delegation attended plenary and workshop sessions and participated in the discussions. The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Australian delegation, Senator the Hon Alan Ferguson and Mr Harry Jenkins MP, were lead speakers for Workshops E and B respectively.
- 2.17 Available summary reports from the workshops and plenary sessions are at Appendix B.
- 2.18 In addition to the conference, members of the Australian delegation took the opportunity during their visit to New Delhi to be briefed by staff of the Australian High Commission on political and economic developments in India.

## General Assembly

- 2.19 The 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference included the annual general meeting of the Association, the General Assembly of the CPA, held on 28 September 2007. The main business of the meeting was the consideration and adoption of the Association's annual report and financial statements and the election of office bearers and regional representatives.

## Executive Committee

- 2.20 The Executive committee met on 22, 23 and 24 September. The Australian Region was represented at these meetings by the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon Alan Ferguson.

## Small Countries Conference

- 2.21 Four Australian delegates: Mr Bill Stefaniak, MLA, ACT; Ms Karin McDonald, MLA, ACT; Mr Robert Knight, MLA, Northern Territory and the Hon. Vicky Jack, MLA, Norfolk Island attended the 27th Conference of Members from Small Countries on 23-24 September 2007. Ms Lisa Singh, MHA, Tasmania also attended as an observer.
- 2.22 On 28 September 2007 the General Assembly of the CPA adopted recommendations of the CPA Working Party, changing the name of the Small Countries Conference to the CPA Small Branches Conference and

increasing the population ceiling to 500,000. The latter decision will allow Tasmania to send delegates with voting status to future meetings.

## Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians

- 2.23 Six Australian delegates represented Australia at the Conference of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) on 24 September 2006: Ms Virginia Judge, MP, NSW; Ms Shelley Hancock MP, NSW; Hon Caroline Schaefer, MLC, South Australia; Ms Karin MacDonald, MLA, Australian Capital Territory; the Hon. Vicky Jack, MLA, Norfolk Island and Ms Lisa Singh, MHA, Tasmania. Ms MacDonald was the Australian Region's representative at the meeting of the CWP Steering Committee on 23 September 2007.
- 2.24 Ms Kashmala Tariq, a Member of the Pakistan National Assembly, was elected to chair the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) for the period 2007 to 2010.

## Meeting of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments

- 2.25 The annual meeting of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table was held concurrently with sessions of the conference. Mr Richard Selth, Director of Legislation and Records, Department of the House of Representatives, represented the Clerk of the House at the meeting and presented a paper. The society aims to foster mutual interest among its members through the exchange of information, views and experience to assist them to exercise their professional duties in relation to their respective legislatures. The Parliaments of New South Wales and Tasmania were also represented at the meeting.

## Concluding comment

- 2.26 The Australian delegation once again extends its thanks to the Indian Parliament for its work in hosting the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and congratulates it on the success of the Conference. The Delegation urges members to continue to maintain appropriate processes and transparency in all aspects of the planning and management of the conference. In particular, it believes that no new business should be brought forward to the various meetings of the Conference unless notified to relevant members a reasonable period in advance of the meeting.

## Bilateral visit to the Philippines

### The Philippines at a glance

Official Name	Republic of the Philippines
Form of State	Republic
Head of State and Government	President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
National Legislature	A bicameral Congress, consisting of a Senate of 24 members, serving six-year terms, and a House of Representatives with 236 members, serving three-year terms.
Capital	Manila, population 10.4 million
Languages	Filipino (Tagalog) and English
Population	87 million (2006)
Land area	300,000 square kilometres
Coastline	36,289 kilometres
GDP	US\$ 141.1 billion (2007 forecast)
GDP per capita	US\$ 1,590 (2007 forecast)
GDP growth	6.3 %
Current Account Balance	US\$ 5.4 billion
Inflation	3.0% (forecast)
Unemployment	8.2 %



## Background

- 3.1 The Philippines lies on the western rim of the Pacific Ocean, north of the equator and approximately 1,200 kilometres from the Asian mainland. It is an archipelago comprising 7,107 islands with a total land area of 300,000 square kilometres. The country is divided into three main island groups: Luzon in the north, the Visayas together with Palawan and Mindoro in the central area, and Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago to the south. Two islands – Luzon and Mindanao – together make up 65 per cent of the total land mass. Located on the Pacific Ocean’s Ring of Fire, the Philippines is prone to seismic activity. Much of the country is mountainous and there are around twenty active volcanoes. The country has a tropical climate with a typhoon season. The capital city, Manila, is located on Luzon. Cebu City on the island of Cebu, and Davao on Mindanao, are the next most populous cities. The bulk of the fast-growing population lives on just eleven islands.

- 3.2 It is believed that the Philippines was first populated by Negrito peoples around 30,000 years ago. Indo-Malays arrived from mainland and island South-East Asia about 3,000 years ago. From about the eleventh century, Chinese, Indonesian and Arab traders arrived, making a significant cultural impact. Most Filipinos are of Malay ethnicity, although significant numbers also have Chinese, Spanish or indigenous ancestry. There are over one hundred languages and dialects in the Philippines, with 90 per cent of the population speaking at least one of the four main languages. Filipino (Tagalog) and English are the official languages.
- 3.3 The Philippines is one of the largest Christian nations in the world. The Spanish introduced Catholicism and today about 85 per cent of Filipinos are Roman Catholic. Protestantism was introduced during the American colonial period and there are also many 'native' Christian churches that have developed over the last century. Arab traders introduced Islam in the south in the 14th century but its spread was curtailed by the arrival of the Spanish two centuries later. Today approximately 5 per cent of the Philippine population is Muslim. The practice of Islam is predominantly located in Western Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago.
- 3.4 European discovery of the Philippines dates from 1521 with the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan. The first Spanish settlement was established in 1565 and Spanish rule continued until 1898. A nationalist movement developed in the late nineteenth century and the Philippine Revolution began in 1896. In 1898 the United States, initially supporting Filipino independence forces, defeated the Spanish navy and captured Manila. Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States. The Americans refused to accept a declaration of independence by the nationalist leader Aguinaldo and the Philippine-American war broke out. Fighting continued until 1902.
- 3.5 In 1901 the United States introduced a civil government with an elective political system under American control. The U.S. also dominated the Philippine economy. Self-government began in 1935, with a planned ten year transition period to full independence. The Japanese invasion of the Philippines in December 1941 and the subsequent three-year occupation inflicted considerable damage and interrupted transition programs. Full independence was established in 1946 and cooperation with the United States became the keynote of post-war policy. Post-war reconstruction was hindered by resistance from the Hukbalahaps, or Huks, a Communist-led guerrilla group in central Luzon.
- 3.6 In 1965 Ferdinand Marcos became President. Rapid development of the economy brought prosperity but also significant criticism of human rights abuses and corruption. The government also faced opposition from the Communist New People's Army and a separatist Muslim insurgency in Mindanao, led by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Amid

increasing civil unrest Marcos declared martial law in 1972. It was partially lifted in 1981 but the assassination of Marcos' opponent Benigno Aquino in 1983 led to a major political crisis. Although Marcos declared himself the winner of the 1986 presidential election the results were widely held to be fraudulent and Marcos was overthrown by the 'People Power' revolution, led by Aquino's widow and supported by the Catholic Church.

- 3.7 As President, Corazon Aquino supervised the introduction of a new constitution in 1987 and the restoration of democratic politics, but popular discontent at the slow pace of economic reform continued to threaten her government. She survived several military coup attempts. In 1992 Fidel Ramos succeeded Aquino as president. His government brought growing political stability and prosperity. He reoriented the Philippines towards Asia and generally raised the country's international profile. He also renewed peace talks with the MNLF and with the communists.
- 3.8 In 1998 Joseph Estrada was elected President. He failed to produce economic improvements and his government was seen as a return to Marcos-style corruption. Peace talks with the communists came to a halt and there was a rise in Muslim violence in the south, including kidnappings by the radical and violent Abu Sayyaf group. In November 2000 Estrada was impeached on charges of embezzlement of government funds and receiving bribes. The Senate's failure to allow key evidence from the prosecution led to the second 'People Power' revolution, which removed Estrada from power. Vice-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was sworn in as President in January 2001.

## Recent developments

- 3.9 President Macapagal-Arroyo was elected President of the Philippines in May 2004 after assuming power in the second 'People Power' uprising in January 2001. Her policy priorities include economic reform, poverty reduction, infrastructure development and the fight against terrorism. On 24 February 2006 President Macapagal-Arroyo declared a state of national emergency due to an alleged conspiracy to bring down the government. The proclamation and subsequent actions drew widespread criticism and the President lifted the declaration on 3 March 2006. The Opposition filed two impeachment complaints against the President, in July 2005 and July 2006. The House of Representatives dismissed both complaints. Elections for seats in half the Senate and the House of Representatives were held in May 2007. The Opposition and Independents won the majority of the Senate seats available, but the President's support in the lower House was strengthened.

## The Muslim minority in the southern Philippines

- 3.10 Filipino Muslims have long felt disadvantaged and unrest in the south has been a constant feature of the post-independence Philippines. Following a renewed outbreak of Muslim insurgency the Ramos government signed a peace agreement in 1996 with the MNLF, the chief insurgent group on Mindanao. This agreement allowed for the creation of a revitalised Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, giving the Moro people, as Muslims in the Southern Philippines are known, limited powers of self-governance. Discussions continued with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a splinter group of the MNLF, who remained dissatisfied with the 1996 agreement and caused continued unrest.
- 3.11 Despite the peace agreement, sporadic periods of fighting have continued in the south. In 2000 there was an escalation of violent unrest, with rebels continuing to press for the island of Mindanao to be declared an independent Islamic state. Following a period of intense clashes in early 2003 a ceasefire was put in place and peace talks resumed in 2005. The existence in the south of the Abu Sayyaf Group, a violent splinter group of the MNLF which is linked to Jemaah Islamiyah, has complicated peace efforts. On 6 March 2007 President Arroyo signed anti-terrorism legislation (the Human Security Act) which came into effect on 15 July.

## Congress and the Executive

- 3.12 The head of state of the Philippines is a president, elected by direct universal suffrage to a single six-year term. The vice-president may serve no more than two successive six-year terms. Under the Philippine constitution the bicameral legislature consists of a Senate of 24 members, serving six-year terms, and a House of Representatives with 236 members, serving three-year terms. The first general elections for the legislature under the new constitution were held in May 1987.

## Economic overview

- 3.13 The Philippine economy has proven to be resilient and in recent years has exceeded expectations. In the first half of 2007, the Philippines economy grew by a near record rate of 7.3 per cent. The primary driver of growth remains business process outsourcing, exports of electronic goods and overseas workers' remittances. A potential new source of growth is mining and quarrying which recorded a growth rate of 33 per cent in the second quarter of 2007.
- 3.14 Progress in the implementation of the fiscal reform program, begun in 2005 to address a looming fiscal crisis, has contributed to financial market

stability reflected in a stronger currency, a rising stock market and manageable borrowing costs for the public sector. Government revenue has been further boosted by raising the value-added tax to 12 per cent early in 2006 and other tax-enhancement measures.

- 3.15 The improvement in government finances has led to a decline in government debt, which the government is targeting to fall from 72 per cent of GDP in 2005 to 58 per cent by 2010. Improved fiscal performance has eased pressure on lending rates. Despite progress on the fiscal front, the economy is still vulnerable to financial shocks as current debt levels remain high, with interest payments accounting for one third of total government expenditure.
- 3.16 To sustain economic gains, the government has committed to continue economic reforms in areas such as infrastructure, tax policy and administration, and further deregulation and privatization of the economy. Sustained results in tax administration will be essential in building credibility and will provide the basis for strengthening macroeconomic stability. Notably, tax revenues in 2006 were 19 per cent above 2005 levels.
- 3.17 Economic growth for 2006 was 5.4 per cent. Private consumption was spurred by record levels of remittances from overseas workers which reached US\$11.4 billion in the first eleven months of 2006 and remained the primary driver of the economy, with investment and export growth remaining sluggish. The services sector, with the largest share of GDP at 48 per cent, sustained its high growth of 6.0-6.3 per cent for 2006. Unemployment remains high at 8.2 per cent.
- 3.18 Agriculture still accounts for 20 per cent of the Philippines' GDP, with 40 per cent of the workforce employed in the sector, producing crops for both export and domestic consumption. Rice and coconuts are the two largest agricultural sectors (Philippine coconuts account for nearly half the world supply). Other major Philippines export crops include bananas, pineapples and mangoes. Semiconductors and electronic microcircuits, finished electrical machinery and garments are the country's leading exports; electronic goods account for 65 per cent of all exports. The domestic content of manufactured exports has not increased and Philippine manufacturing is still focused on the assembly of imported components. Any further upward growth in exports will depend on global demand for electronic goods, particularly in the US, Japan and China.

## **Bilateral relations between Australia and the Philippines**

- 3.19 Australia and the Philippines share common perspectives on many regional, economic and security issues and have a long history of bilateral

cooperation. Diplomatic relations were established when Australia opened its first Consulate-General in Manila in 1946. An Australian Ambassador to the Philippines was appointed in 1957. The Philippines opened an Embassy in Canberra in 1962. The relationship consists of development assistance, defence and law enforcement cooperation, and increasing people to people links through trade, investment, cultural exchange, tourism and migration.

- 3.20 In recent years, bilateral visits to and from the Philippines at ministerial level have become more frequent, including a visit by the President of the Philippines, Dr Gloria Arroyo, to Australia in May 2007. Reciprocal visits by members of parliament of both countries are made regularly. There continues to be an active program of visits by senior officials on both sides for discussions on issues of mutual interest, including trade, security, police and defence matters.
- 3.21 In 2006-07, Australian aid to the Philippines was estimated to be \$68.8 million. The May 2007 budget saw an increase in aid of 46 per cent for 2007-08 to approximately \$100 million, making the Philippines the fourth largest recipient of Australian bilateral development assistance.
- 3.22 The Australia-Philippines Development Assistance Strategy 2007-11 was agreed to in March 2007 and endorsed by the two governments during the visit to Australia by President Arroyo in May 2007. Australia's objective is to contribute to improving the prospects for economic growth, poverty reduction and national stability. The Strategy focuses Australia's assistance in three areas: economic growth, basic education and national stability and human security. In May 2007 Australia also announced it would provide \$250,000 for the funding of human rights projects in the Philippines.
- 3.23 Australia is the second largest provider of defence training to the Philippines, after the United States. Bilateral defence cooperation has included high level policy talks, training of defence personnel in Australia and visits of senior officials. The defence relationship has recently grown, with a focus on counter-terrorism, maritime security and assistance to the Philippines Defence Reform Program. During President Arroyo's visit to Australia in 2007, a bilateral Status of Visiting Forces Agreement was signed by Australia and the Philippines.
- 3.24 Australia and the Philippines share a common interest in cooperating in regional affairs through fora such as APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum. Both Australia and the Philippines are active members of the Cairns Group, a coalition of seventeen agricultural exporting countries. Both countries participated in the inaugural East Asia Summit held in

Malaysia in December 2005. The second East Asia Summit was held in Cebu in the Philippines in January 2007.

### Commercial relations

- 3.25 Two-way merchandise trade between Australia and the Philippines was valued at \$1.81 billion in 2006-07. Both governments consider there to be significant potential for growth. Major Australian exports to the Philippines in 2006-07 included copper ores, milk and cream, and medicaments (including veterinary). Major Australian imports from the Philippines included crude petroleum, telecommunications equipment, copper and computers.
- 3.26 Total trade in services between Australia and the Philippines in 2006-07 comprised \$524 million. Major Australian service exports to the Philippines were education-related travel (\$66 million) and personal travel services (\$56 million). Major service imports from the Philippines were personal travel and business travel.
- 3.27 The Australia Philippines Business Council (APBC), established in 1975, provides a focal point for networking between Australian and Philippine business communities. The APBC's counterpart organisation in the Philippines is the Philippines Australia Business Council.
- 3.28 The Philippines' annual population growth rate is currently around 2.3 per cent and its continuing inability to meet the demand for food from domestic production will lead to increasing opportunities for Australian agribusiness exports. Australia has a reputation of being 'clean and green' and is well-positioned to capitalise on this image in the supply of agricultural commodities. Areas of potential include the supply of live cattle, sugar, fruit, vegetables, grains and cotton.
- 3.29 With the Philippine Government's focus on the modernisation of the agriculture sector, prospects for supplying equipment and services to domestic agricultural production projects are also good. Australia has the potential to participate in the country's goal of increasing productivity through the sale of technology in such areas as irrigation, post-harvest facilities and seed production.
- 3.30 The Philippines is considered to be the fifth most mineralised country in the world, based on land mass comparison, with mineral resources ranked globally as third in gold, fourth in copper, fifth in nickel and sixth in chromite deposits. Stronger government support for the mining sector has seen renewed international interest. Significant Australian investment is already committed, mostly at the exploration and development stage, and much larger amounts are likely in the future. As well as direct mining

investment, there are also export opportunities for Australian mining service providers.

### **The Australian Filipino community**

- 3.31 Most Filipino settlement in Australia is comparatively recent. At the beginning of the 20th century there were approximately 700 Philippines-born persons in Australia, and as few as 141 at the time of the 1947 Australian Census. In the 1950s the population began to increase: significant numbers of Filipino students were allowed entry to Australia under the Colombo Plan and many chose to stay after graduation.
- 3.32 Following immigration policy reform in 1966 the Filipino population approximately doubled every five years to 1991, making it one of the fastest growing overseas-born populations in Australia. The final repudiation of the White Australia Policy and the declaration of martial law in the Philippines in 1972 led to rapid growth in the Philippines-born population in Australia over the next two decades. Most Filipino migration occurred during the 1980s, peaking in 1987-1988. In the 1990s settler arrivals began to decline and the growth in the Philippines-born population slowed.
- 3.33 Since the 1970s, most Philippines-born settlers have been sponsored by a family member. The 2006 Census recorded 120,538 Philippines-born persons living in Australia and 160,377 claiming Filipino ancestry. Sixty-five per cent of those born in the Philippines were female. Of those who were employed, approximately one third each were in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled occupations.

### **The Delegation's program**

- 3.34 The Delegation visited Manila and the island province of Bohol. Meetings were held with a range of national and local officials. Key issues which were discussed were the bilateral economic relationship between Australia and the Philippines, including opportunities for increased Australian investment in mining and agriculture, development assistance and security issues, including the threat from Islamic extremists in the southern Philippines. The Delegation found the opportunity to explore these and other issues with congressional leaders and government officials extremely valuable.

### **Bohol, 1-2 October**

- 3.35 Bohol Province is the 10th largest island in the Philippines, located in the central Visayas between southeast Cebu and southwest Leyte. It has a land area of approximately 4,100 square kilometres and a population of 1.14

million. The capital, Tagbilaran City, has a population of 78,000. Bohol has experienced significant growth in recent years and is developing as a prime eco-cultural tourist destination and a strong agro-industrial province.

- 3.36 The Delegation visited a number of sites on the island, including projects supported by the Australian Government and examples of Bohol's developing eco-tourism industry. The Delegation was also privileged to have a comprehensive briefing from Governor Erico Aumentado and his staff on development plans for the province.
- 3.37 Bohol is one of the five target provinces of the Philippines Australia Community Assistance Program's Focal Community Assistance Scheme (PACAP-FOCAS). PACAP is a long-standing AusAID program providing small grants assistance to community-based organisations engaged in community development activities. It supports initiatives that aim to alleviate poverty and build capacity to provide basic services to the poor. Since it started in 1986 PACAP has supported more than 1,500 activities, benefiting around 800,000 Filipinos through collaboration with more than 700 locally based organisations.
- 3.38 The Delegation visited the Villa Aurora Permaculture Project at Bilar in southern Bohol. The three-year project, which was completed in June 2007, benefits 60 farming families through capacity building, agroforestry development, enterprise development and watershed management. The cost over three years has been approximately \$50,000, of which the Australian Government has contributed two thirds.



*The Delegation with members of the Bilar community*

- 3.39 The project supports the production of lakatan bananas, black pepper and atsute, the planting of fruit trees, vermi-composting and contour farming. It has also supported the establishment of a nursery for the propagation and distribution of fruit and timber trees and vegetables, a demonstration farm and the construction of a community store building.
- 3.40 The Delegation was greeted very warmly by community members, who expressed their gratitude to the Australian Government for its assistance and gave a briefing on the project and its very positive impact on their community. Senator Ferguson responded that the Delegation was delighted to see Australian aid funds being spent so effectively in providing not only immediate material and technical assistance but also in providing community members with the skills to continue successful initiatives into the future, beyond the period of direct assistance.
- 3.41 The Delegation also visited Loboc, a municipality of approximately 16,000 people in southern Bohol, where it enjoyed a concert from the Loboc Youth Band and the Loboc Children's Choir. The Loboc Youth Band is a recipient of Australian aid. In collaboration with the municipal government and other local organisations AusAID is supporting a two-year project which provides for the purchase of instruments, the training of teachers and the support of students.
- 3.42 Loboc has a strong musical heritage but the ageing of master musicians and the lack of instruments and appropriate venues for teaching has increasingly threatened the survival of this heritage. More than half of the town's population lives below the income threshold and there is high unemployment. The project aims to contribute to poverty reduction by providing an alternative livelihood for young people through the revival of local musical traditions and providing scholarships to deserving students.
- 3.43 The Loboc Children's Choir is composed of thirty school children from nine to thirteen from the Central Elementary School of Loboc. The Choir is a 'cultural treasure' of the province of Bohol, and often sings for visiting dignitaries and tourists. Its concert repertoire is a combination of classical, folk, modern and children's songs. In 2003 the choir was the Grand Prize Winner at the 6th International Folksongs Festival held in Barcelona, Spain.
- 3.44 While in Loboc the Delegation was hosted for lunch by Mayor Leon Calipusan during a river cruise on the Loboc River. Other sites visited on Bohol included the Philippine Tarsier Foundation's sanctuary in south-west Bohol and the Chocolate Hills geological formation in central Bohol, examples of Bohol's growing popularity as an eco-tourism destination.

- 3.45 The Delegation also visited the Blood Compact Monument in Tagbilaran City, which commemorates the first treaty of friendship between Filipinos and Europeans. In 1565, forty years after Magellan and his crew had become the first Europeans to reach the Philippines, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi sailed from Mexico with four ships to establish a Spanish settlement.
- 3.46 Like Magellan, Legazpi met with hostility from the inhabitants. His attempt to land on the island of Cebu was thwarted and he headed south. A change of wind forced his fleet back to the north in the direction of Bohol, where he was given a hostile welcome. From his Malay pilot Legazpi learned that the hostility was the result of expeditions by Portuguese raiders from the Moluccas, who had plundered Bohol and killed or enslaved about one thousand of its inhabitants a few years earlier.
- 3.47 With the help of his pilot Legazpi explained to two Boholano chiefs that he and his men were not Portuguese and had come in peace. The chiefs ended their hostility and agreed to enter a pact of friendship. In March 1565 Legazpi and the two chiefs performed the now famous blood compact. The event is still celebrated in Bohol every year in June with the Sandugo (One Blood) festival. The Delegation was pleased to affirm the friendship between Australia and the Philippines at the site of the first expression of friendship between Filipinos and Europeans 442 years earlier.

### Manila, 3-5 October

#### Senate of the Philippines, 3 October

- 3.48 The Delegation was welcomed by the President of the Senate, Senator Manny Villar, who introduced Senate Minority Leader Senator Aquilino Pimentel and other Senators. Discussion covered a range of matters, including security issues and educational opportunities in Australia for Filipino students. Senator Ferguson also expressed the Delegation's very positive response to the visits to community projects in Bohol supported by Australian aid.
- 3.49 Senator Ferguson thanked the President for the hospitality of the Senate in hosting the Delegation's visit and presented him with an invitation from the Australian Parliament for the Congress of the Philippines to send a delegation to Australia in the near future. Following the meeting the Delegation was given a tour of the Senate Museum and observed a session of the Senate, where the Delegation was formally acknowledged.

### House of Representatives, 3 October

- 3.50 The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Jose De Venecia Jr, welcomed the Delegation and introduced other Members of the House. The Speaker referred to the positive experiences of the large number of Filipinos in Australia and expressed his thanks to Australia for receiving them so warmly. Discussion ensued on a range of issues, including the opportunities for further development of the economic relationship between Australia and the Philippines, and security cooperation.
- 3.51 Senator Ferguson presented the Speaker with an invitation from the Australian Parliament for the Congress of the Philippines to send a delegation to Australia in the near future. Following the meeting the Delegation attended a session of the House of Representatives, where the Delegation was formally acknowledged. In the evening the Speaker hosted a dinner for the Delegation.

### Wreath laying at Rizal Park, 4 October

- 3.52 Senator Ferguson laid a wreath on behalf of the Delegation at the Rizal Park monument. The monument commemorates Dr Jose Rizal, a hero of the Philippine Revolution, who was executed at the site in 1896. Official ceremonies inaugurating a fully independent Republic of the Philippines were held on the site on 4 July, 1946.

### Department of Foreign Affairs, 4 October

- 3.53 The Delegation met Mr Edsel T. Custodio, Acting Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Undersecretary for International Economic Relations. Mr Custodio had played a senior role in the meetings of officials at the 2007 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Sydney and commented on the smooth running and successful outcomes of the forum.
- 3.54 Mr Custodio noted that Australian exports to the Philippines were picking up after a slight fall in recent years. A significant area of potential growth is meat, both processed meat and live cattle. Meat volumes are predicted to grow in the Philippines because of rapid population growth, the expanding economy, a growing restaurant and fast-food industry and an expanding smallgoods manufacturing sector.
- 3.55 Live cattle exports to the Philippines have fallen by almost 80 per cent since 2000-01 but Mr Custodio referred to the opportunity for increased imports of live cattle from Australia and also for Australian investment in the local cattle industry and assistance with development of the industry.
- 3.56 Other issues discussed included the WTO process and the Philippines' move towards a mandatory 10 per cent ethanol content in fuel by 2010.

Mr Custodio noted the opportunity for Australian investment in the development of biofuel technology.

#### National Economic and Development Authority, 4 October

- 3.57 The Delegation met Mr Augusto B. Santos, Acting Director-General of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and other staff for an audio-visual presentation and briefing on development issues in the Philippines. NEDA is established by the Constitution as an independent economic and planning agency headed by the President, with the role of recommending and implementing integrated and coordinated programs and policies for national development.
- 3.58 The Delegation was told that the Philippines Government aims to meet the United Nations Millennium Development Goals by 2010, rather than by the UN target of 2015. Currently, the Philippines is lagging in poverty reduction, hunger reduction, child and maternal mortality rates and access to water and sanitation.
- 3.59 The meeting noted the increase in Australian aid to the Philippines from \$69 million in 2006-07 to \$101 million in 2007-08, 40 per cent of which is targeted at education. The Philippines is the fourth largest recipient of Australian development assistance. Delegation members asked how specific projects are chosen as recipients of Australian aid funds and were given an explanation of the three-layer process of review to ensure that projects meet both local and national development goals.

#### Department of National Defense, 4 October

- 3.60 The Delegation met Lieutenant General Ernesto Carolina, Undersecretary of the Department of National Defense. The meeting began by noting the significant defence cooperation between Australia and the Philippines. Discussion followed on aspects of recruitment, training and retention of personnel in the Philippines armed forces. More than 120 Philippines defence personnel train in Australia each year and there is considerable cooperation between specific agencies of the two countries.
- 3.61 General Carolina and his staff gave the Delegation a comprehensive briefing on ASEAN military cooperation and counter-terrorism initiatives, particularly in the context of the porous maritime borders between the Philippines and other countries in the region.
- 3.62 Australia is contributing a \$10 million counter-terrorism assistance package over the period 2003-2008. This includes building capacity within law enforcement agencies and the development of border control measures and port security. The Delegation was told that recent anti-terrorism legislation had drawn on Australian anti-terrorism laws.

- 3.63 The reality of the terrorist threat in the Philippines was dramatically illustrated a month after the Delegation's visit when two people, including a Member of the House of Representatives, were killed in an explosion at the House of Representatives. A bomb was remotely detonated as the House ended its session and Members were leaving. It destroyed part of the entrance to the House of Representatives complex.
- 3.64 A subject discussed in this and a number of other meetings was the bilateral Status of Visiting Forces Agreement signed by Australia and the Philippines during President Arroyo's visit to Australia in May 2007. The Agreement was endorsed by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties of the Australian Parliament in September 2007 and was awaiting ratification by the Philippines Senate at the time of the Delegation's visit.

#### Australian Embassy, 4 October

- 3.65 A reception was held at the Australian Embassy at which Delegation members were able to meet representatives of the Australian community in the Philippines and discuss a range of issues.

#### Department of Environment and Natural Resources, 5 October

- 3.66 The Delegation met Mr Manuel Gerochi, Acting Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). DENR staff gave the delegation an audio-visual presentation on the state of the Philippine environment, sustainable development and climate change.
- 3.67 The Philippines is one of the most mega-diverse countries in the world, containing two thirds of the world's biodiversity and 70-80 per cent of endangered species. It ranks ninth in the world for biodiversity and Australia ranks fifth, so the two countries face similar challenges in preserving biodiversity. However, it is also one of the worst 'hot spots' for habitat destruction, with loss of forest cover being a major issue. Land-use changes, over-exploitation of resources, invasive species, pollution and climate change are all significant issues for the Philippines.
- 3.68 A range of strategies, including the establishment of national parks have been implemented to address habitat loss. The Land Administration and Management Project, currently in Phase 2, is part of a long-term program to audit land in the Philippines as part of the government's commitment to land administration reform. The project aims to provide increased land tenure security and improved property and land valuation systems to assist in the planning of effective land management and conservation strategies. It is being carried out with support from AusAID: \$48 million to 2010.

- 3.69 The Philippines was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Kyoto Protocol and has introduced a number of initiatives to combat climate change. Other target issues are air pollution, water quality and waste disposal.
- 3.70 DENR is also responsible for the mining sector. The Philippines has significant mineral resources, including gold, copper, nickel and chromite. Over the last two decades, however, mining's share of the Philippines' exports has fallen considerably as a result of various factors, including the decline of international mineral prices, policy instabilities, land use conflicts, low social acceptability and lack of domestic capital.
- 3.71 Greater policy certainty and increasing demand has seen a renewal of interest in the Philippines' mineral resources. Australia is one of the major foreign investors and the opportunities for further investment in the sector were noted in several meetings the Delegation had during its visit. The challenge noted by DENR is to exploit the increasing opportunities in an environmentally responsible and sustainable way.

#### Department of Trade and Industry, 5 October

- 3.72 The Delegation met Mr Ramon Vincente Kabigting, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry. Discussion concentrated on issues relating to the WTO process and the development of separate bilateral agreements. In 2006 the Philippines signed its first free trade agreement, with Japan, and is engaged in discussions with the United States about a possible FTA. Other agreements with major trading partners may follow.
- 3.73 The meeting noted the good trading relationship between Australia and the Philippines. Both governments consider there to be significant potential for growth.

#### Executive Secretary, 5 October

- 3.74 The Delegation's final meeting was with Hon Eduardo Ermirta, Executive Secretary of the Republic of the Philippines. The Executive Secretary is Chair of the Anti-Terrorism Council and discussion focussed on security issues, particularly relating to the challenges in developing legislation which balances human rights and the need to protect the community.

#### Dinner hosted by the President of the Senate, 5 October

- 3.75 The President of the Senate, Senator Manny Villar, hosted a dinner to farewell the Delegation.

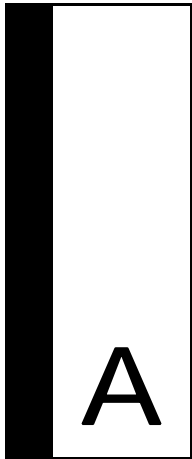


*Left to right: Senator the Hon Sandy Macdonald, Senator Linda Kirk, Hon Eduardo Ermirta, Executive Secretary of the Republic of the Philippines, Senator the Hon Alan Ferguson, Mr Harry Jenkins MP, Mr Tony Hely, Australian Ambassador*

## Conclusions

- 3.76 During the course of a busy program the Delegation had the opportunity to explore a number of important issues in discussions with members of the Philippines Congress and in a varied program of official meetings and site visits. Delegation members found these opportunities to be instructive and stimulating.
- 3.77 The Delegation also welcomed the opportunity to reaffirm the mutual friendship and respect between the two countries, and a depth of goodwill. This goodwill was clearly evident, not only in official meetings but also in the Delegation's contact with members of the Philippines community in general.
- 3.78 The Delegation noted the increasingly positive trends in the Philippines economy and the opportunity for increased bilateral trade with Australia. Mining and agriculture in particular were noted as areas with significant opportunities for Australian investment.
- 3.79 However, the Delegation also noted the continuing economic, security and environmental challenges facing the country and was interested to learn about the strategies being developed to meet them.

3.80 The Delegation concluded that the aims of the visit had been fulfilled. Members appreciated the opportunity to travel beyond Manila in order to gain a wider perspective on a range of matters and were very appreciative of the hospitality they received and the warmth of the welcome given to them in the capital and also in Bohol. Delegation members wish to record their sincere thanks to all those who contributed to the success of the visit. More detailed acknowledgments appear at the beginning of this report.

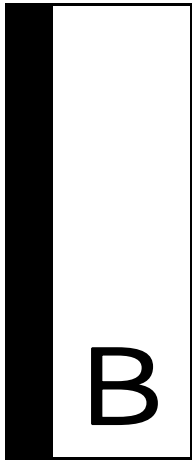


## Appendix A

Address by Rt Hon Don McKinnon, Commonwealth Secretary-General, to the 53<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

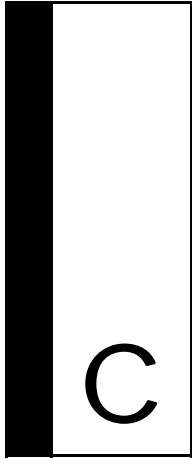
**and**

Address by Dr William F. Shija, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, to the 53<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference



## Appendix B

Session details and workshop and plenary reports  
from the 53<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary  
Conference



## Appendix C

### Delegation Program 30 September-5 October 2007

#### **Sunday 30 September – Manila**

1835 Arrival at Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Manila

#### **Monday 1 October – Manila, Bohol**

1030 Briefing from Australian Embassy staff

1430 Departure from Manila for Tagbilaran City, Bohol

1600 Arrival at Tagbilaran City, welcome reception by local government officials

1620 Visit to Bohol Bee Farm

2000 Private dinner

#### **Tuesday 2 October – Bohol**

1015 Visit to PACAP project, Bilar

1115 Viewing of Chocolate Hills, welcome by Mayor Manuel Molina of Carmen Municipality

1230 Lunch on Loboc River cruise, welcome by Mayor Leon Calipusan of Loboc Municipality

1330 Concert by Loboc Youth Band and Loboc Children's Choir

1500 Visit to Blood Compact monument

1530 Visit to Corella Tarsier Sanctuary

1830 Briefing from Bohol Governor Erico Aumentado and provincial staff

1930 Dinner hosted by Governor Aumentado

**Wednesday 3 October – Manila**

- 1010 Departure from Tagbilaran City for Manila
- 1140 Arrival at Manila
- 1400 Meeting with Senator Manny Villar, President of the Senate
- 1500 Tour of Senate Museum
- 1520 Viewing of Senate session
- 1630 Meeting with Jose De Venecia Jr, Speaker of the House of Representatives
- 1715 Viewing of House session
- 2100 Dinner hosted by the Speaker of the House of Representatives

**Thursday 4 October – Manila**

- 0910 Wreath-laying ceremony at Rizal Park
- 0930 Meeting with Mr Edsel T. Custodio Acting Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs
- 1045 Meeting with Mr Augusto B. Santos, Acting Director-General, National Economic and Development Authority
- 1200 Lunch hosted by National Economic and Development Authority
- 1350 Meeting with Lieutenant General Ernesto Carolina, Undersecretary, Department of National Defense
- 1900 Embassy reception

**Friday 5 October – Manila**

- 1040 Meeting with Mr Manuel Gerochi, Acting Secretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources
- 1200 Lunch hosted by Department of Environment and Natural Resources
- 1410 Meeting with Mr Ramon Vincente Kabigting, Assistant Secretary, Department of Trade and Industry
- 1600 Meeting with Hon Eduardo Ermirta, Executive Secretary of the Republic of the Philippines
- 1930 Dinner hosted by Senator Manny Villar, President of the Senate

**Saturday 6 October**

- 1420 Departure from Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Manila