



PRESS RELEASE  
LHL-016-2016

## **PRESIDENT BENIGNO S. AQUINO III MEETS FILIPINO COMMUNITY OF LOS ANGELES AND CONFERS ORDER OF SIKATUNA TO AMBASSADOR JOSE L. CUISIA, JR.**



Los Angeles, 18 February 2016 - President Benigno S. Aquino III met 800 members of the Filipino-American community of Los Angeles and southwestern United States filling to capacity the Ballroom of Hilton LAX. The large gathering concluded the President's Working Visit to Los Angeles on Wednesday, 16 February 2016.

In his welcome remarks, Philippine Consul General Leo Herrera-Lim presented to the President "our kababayans who represent the diversity of Filipino presence in southern California, southern Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas."

Notwithstanding their diversity, "They are Filipinos sharing a common aspiration for our country, the home of their parents and grandparents," Consul General Herrera-Lim said.

Philippine Ambassador Jose L. Cuisia, Jr. referred to the high level of priority attached by the President and his Administration in engaging overseas Filipino communities.

The President told the audience that major reforms in education, health, and local governance have ushered in a period of steady economic growth and social transformation in the Philippines. He paid tribute to outgoing Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert Del Rosario highlighting his principled leadership and dynamic reforms he instituted in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Members of the Filipino community expressed appreciation for the President's "cordial" and "approachable" style. They conveyed the hope that the reform agenda would be continued by future Administrations.

"Looking forward, most of us are hopeful that the next Administration would preserve and build on the gains of the past five and a half years. We also hope that the new set of government

leaders will have the determination and game plan to reduce poverty, create jobs at home, modernize infrastructure, improve the peace and order situation, and bring a just and lasting peace in Mindanao. Filipinos in the United States continue to exhort the Government to safeguard the welfare and well-being of overseas Filipino workers, more specifically those who are victims of illegal recruitment and trafficking in persons,” Ambassador Cuisia said.

President Benigno S. Aquino III conferred the Order of Sikatuna, with the rank of Grand Cross (Datu) on Ambassador Jose L. Cuisia, Jr. in recognition of the envoy’s “exemplary accomplishments in working for the advancement of the country’s national interests in its relations with the United States.”

In closing, President Aquino called on the Filipino communities to foster greater camaraderie and unity in pursuit of common goals.

Accompanying the President at the event were members of his Cabinet, namely: Secretary of Finance Cesar V. Purisima; Secretary of Defense Voltaire T. Gazmin; Secretary of the Cabinet Jose Rene D. Almendras; National Socio-Economic Planning Secretary Emmanuel F. Esguerra; Secretary of the Presidential Communications Operations Office Herminio B. Coloma, Jr.; Secretary Emmanuel M. de Guzman of the Climate Change Commission; and Secretary Julia Abad of the Presidential Management Staff.



*Photo above shows Singer Noel Cabangon entertaining the Filipino-American community.*



*Photo above shows Consul General Leo Herrera-Lim addressing the audience.*



*Photo above shows President Aquino conferring the Order of Sikatuna to Ambassador Jose L. Cuisia, Jr..*



*Photo above shows President Aquino with Ambassador Cuisia together with his family.*