



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

PHILIPPINE CONSULATE GENERAL

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA



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Top PHL Envoy Speaks at Los Angeles World Affairs Council & Town Hall



24 November 2020, Los Angeles – Speaking at the Los Angeles World Affairs Council and Town Hall (LAWAC&TH) on 17 November 2020, Philippine Ambassador to the United States of America, His Excellency Jose Manuel G. Romualdez joined the ranks of prominent diplomats and world leaders who have been featured by the prestigious platform to expound on their countries’ foreign policy and pandemic realities.

RAND Senior Defense Analyst Prof. Derek Grossman moderated the conversation that centered on the Philippines-United States alliance in the context of shared security, economic and diplomatic interests. The conversation couldn’t have been better timed as the United States had just come out of one of the most anticipated elections in its history, the result of which is expected to significantly impact regional dynamics in Asia.

Ambassador Romualdez affirmed the long-standing alliance between the Philippines and the United States will remain strong whoever leads either country, saying “...*bilateral relations between the two countries has withstood so many wars...and is fortified by its people-to-people ties.*”

The Ambassador noted that there are over four million Filipinos in the U.S. with more than 25% of them residing in the State of California and recent elections have shown the growing participation of Filipinos in the American political system.

Aside from this, Filipinos have also helped shape the American economy, culture and history since the first recorded arrival of Filipinos on the continental United States in 1587. In recognition of their significant contributions, the U.S. Government has declared October as Filipino-American History Month, mandating a nationwide commemoration of the Filipinos' landing in Morro Bay, CA in said month.

Most recently, the CoViD-19 pandemic highlighted the indelible impact of Filipino medical professionals on the healthcare system of the United States. Cognizant of their sacrifices and the primary importance of saving lives, Amb. Romualdez emphasized that the PHL Government joined the global effort in ensuring a just and equitable access to a CoViD-19 vaccine for all.

“At the end of day, [President Duterte] just wants to assure everyone, every Filipino, that the government is doing everything it can to keep everyone healthy,” the Ambassador said.

Reinforcing the government's efforts in serving overseas Filipinos, the PHL Embassy and Consulates General across the United States have remained accessible to Filipino-Americans amidst the stay-at-home orders imposed by local governments since the pandemic's onset in March of this year.

The Philippines enjoyed strong pre-CoViD-19 economic fundamentals, enabling it to cushion the economic impact of the pandemic-induced lockdown and project a bounce back in the first quarter of 2021. The Ambassador explained that, *“[Philippine] President Rodrigo Duterte has struck a balance between safeguarding public health and keeping the economy afloat.”*

On the Philippines' relations with the U.S. and China, the Ambassador clarified that *“it is not fair to say that Duterte is cozying up to China and that it is a zero-sum game... We feel that our interests are best protected by reaching out to major countries...”*

Joining almost 200 online participants during the livestream were Consul General Adelio Angelito S. Cruz, Political Officer Consul Rea G. Oreta and information officer Mary Grace “Joss” Leano and many other personnel of the Philippine Consulate General in Los Angeles.

Established in 1953, LAWAC&TH is a non-partisan private organization dedicated to providing platforms for promoting understanding of global political and economic affairs. Prior to the Ambassador, former Philippine President Benigno S. Aquino III and his late father, former Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr. have been guest speakers in the Council.

The discussion with Ambassador Romualdez is available at the LAWAC&TH's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8-Wk3OIAIM>. END.