



CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
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Ambassador Romualdez Faces New York Press with Candor and Advice



Ambassador Jose Manuel Romualdez (seated, 3rd from right) meets with journalists at a press luncheon at the Philippine Center New York hosted by Consul General Ma. Theresa Dizon-De Vega (seated, 3rd from left). (Photo by Boyet Loverita)

NEW YORK, 5 February 2018 – On his first official trip to New York, Ambassador Jose Manuel Romualdez met with the New York-based members of the media at a press luncheon hosted by the Philippine Consulate General at the Philippine Center last 3 February 2018.

Consul General Ma. Theresa Dizon-De Vega thanked the Ambassador for making time to meet with the community in New York. The press luncheon was a side-event during the 4th Filipino-American Community General Assembly also taking place at the Philippine Center.

In his brief remarks, Ambassador Romualdez recognized the contributions of his fellow journalists in nation building, and lauded the current social environment in the Philippines that upholds freedom of the press.

During the Q&A that followed, the Ambassador addressed various queries from the media.

Asked what he expects of Filipino-Americans, he candidly stated that “Filipinos need to come together specially on important issues such as immigration.”

He noted that based on his meetings early in his tenure with US Senators and members of Congress, Americans have the highest regard for Filipinos. He added, “Filipinos are a potent group. You don’t know how much power you have.” He encouraged Filipino-Americans to voice out their concerns, positions, and ideas to their legislators, on behalf of their families and communities because this kind of representation is important for policy-makers in the US.

On the Heritage Foundation’s rating of the Philippines as a “moderately free economy,” the Ambassador remarked that the country is making strides in upgrading fiscal policies and industry regulations. He noted that the recently approved Tax Reform for Acceleration

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and Inclusion (TRAIN) is a critical step in increasing progressive financial activity. He added that several policies need and are being updated to make “ease of doing business” in the country much more attractive to investors.

As for the Philippines’ drug problem, he stated that the administration has given authority to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) to carry out the anti-narcotic campaign and that law enforcement authorities are exerting utmost efforts in advancing the rule of law. According to him, the Philippines is working with the US in capacity-building and intelligence sharing. He admitted that it is a complicated issue, saying “It cannot be done overnight” but that President Duterte is fully committed to do what he can to rid the country of this scourge.

On the West Philippine Sea and Benham Rise marine scientific research issues, he reiterated President Duterte’s pronouncement that the Philippines is not giving up its claim on any of the disputed features, but that we are adopting a new strategy in dealing with all claimants including opening more dialogues with China. He also emphasized that the Philippines must upgrade its defense posture, to better safeguard our waters and sovereignty.

Asked for his message to Filipinos who may feel that politics has prevented the country from moving forward, he had this to offer, “It’s time to move forward. In my professional and personal life I tried to do my part in helping all the administrations regardless of political affiliations. Nobody owns the Philippines. Nobody has a monopoly on the love of country.”

To his fellow media practitioners he shared some advice, “If you’re going to be in media, you have to be credible. You have an important role to play.” END



To his press colleagues, Ambassador Romualdez says, “If you’re going to be in media, you have to be credible.” (Photo by Kabayan Media/Lambert Parong)