

PRESS RELEASE

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REINTEGRATION PROGRAM FOR OFWs LAUNCHED IN SINGAPORE; OFWs NOW TAUGHT TO BE ENTREPRENEURS

09 September 2004 – Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alberto G. Romulo announced that more and more programs are being launched all over the world to help Filipinos face the challenges of coming home to the Philippines after years of working abroad. “The third pillar of Philippine foreign policy is assisting Filipino nationals abroad, but this does not preclude assisting them when they eventually come home,” Secretary Romulo said.

“Here now lies the challenge of reintegration,” the Secretary said, adding, “reintegration entails equipping our OFWs with the necessary skills and know how to enhance their livelihood when they come home to the Philippines. I am pleased to note that several Philippine embassies are being credited by the OFWs themselves, as well as the local Media in their host countries for implementing livelihood training and demonstration programs that prove invaluable to a balikbayan OFW.”

The Secretary was referring to the very recent news of success stories by the Philippine Embassies in Malaysia and Brunei. Now, a similar program is going to be implemented in Singapore, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Singapore Chapter. The UNIFEM, a national committee, which works towards women’s empowerment and gender equality, launched on 15 August 2004 a project to help OFWs plan a future for themselves and their family in the Philippines even while still working in Singapore.

Held at the Bayanihan Centre, the UNIFEM Singapore Workers Project is comprised of four training courses, which are followed up with a reintegration program in the Philippines. The four training courses are:

- **Managing the Family and Cultural Issues Course.** This course aims to develop the worker’s self-confidence and personal skills to create a vision for herself and her family and manage issues that conflict with her budget and savings plan. The course offers role-playing opportunities for the worker to develop her skills (two three-hour sessions);
- **Personal Budgeting and Saving Training Course.** This course covers the basics of goal setting, developing a savings plan, budgeting personal income and expenses to meet the savings plan and banking options available in Singapore. Upon completion, the participant will have developed her personal budget, savings plan and have access to a bank account (two three-hour sessions);
- **POEA Information Course.** This course covers Philippine legal requirements for registration of OFWs, the services offered by Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) in Singapore and benefits to ex-OFWs when they return to the Philippines (one three-hour session); and
- **Entrepreneurship Course.** This course will be based on existing training courses offered by Filipino Overseas Workers-Singapore (FOWS) and GoForth Training in Singapore and will cover business and market planning, understanding the enterprise life-cycle, basic bookkeeping, enterprise registration and taxation.

After completing these training courses in Singapore, the student can enroll in the Philippines Reintegration Program, which aims to further develop the skills of returning workers by helping them establish a family enterprise. The program includes up to 12 months of business planning and development support plus the opportunity for additional loan support. The program will be available to workers planning to return home for the year 2005 and 2006. The Training Center Director and UNIFEM representatives will interview OFWs who will

participate in the said program.

To qualify, overseas Filipinos:

- *Must be registered with the POEA;*
- *Complete all four courses offered and present proof of meeting;*
- *Have a personal savings plan (i.e. savings in the bank account);and*
- *Have plans to return to the Philippines in 2005 or 2006 and plans to put-up a business upon his/her return.*

The first three courses are offered free of charge while participation fee for the last course will be borne by each student. Courses are held on Sundays and are open to all Filipino workers. Enrolment began in July 2004 on a first come-first served basis. END.