



19 June 2012 - Philippine Ambassador to France Cristina G. Ortega led the flag-raising ceremonies at the Philippine Embassy grounds on June 12 marking the 114th anniversary of the proclamation of Philippine Independence.

Ambassador Ortega was joined by officers and members of various Filipino Community associations in Paris as well as by the Embassy officers and staff.

The flag-raising ceremony was followed by a short program that included the reading of the Philippine Independence Day messages of Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario by Vice Consul Winston Dean Almeda and of President Benigno S. Aquino III by Consul General Maria Josefina Ceballos.

In her remarks, Ambassador Ortega said that the Aquino Administration is doing much to restore confidence and to rally the Filipino people to fulfill our country's great potential. She conveyed the "good news" about the Philippines indicating that the Philippine economy grew by 6.4 % in the first quarter of this year, the highest growth in the region (except for China).

She also mentioned that the Philippines also had one of the best performing equities in the world. Credit ratings agencies such as Moody's, Standard and Poor's and Fitch's, have recognized the progress in the Philippine economy, thus, meriting some credit upgrades.

Ambassador Ortega concluded with her inspiring message, "*Marami po tayong maipagmamalaki. Taas noo po tayong magsasabi na tayo ay Pilipino. Mabuhay ang Pilipino! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!*"

Members of *Pinoy Jam*, a group of Paris-based artists and musicians, shared their outstanding musical talents. Mimi Agbay Duhamel's heartfelt rendition of "*Tagumpay ng Ating Lahi*," got the audience teary eyed and proud to be "*Pinoy*."

Strong nationalistic emotions welled up as former Ms. Saigon cast member, Dennis Astorga, and promising French Filipina singer Vanessa Monot, sang their duet version of

"Pilipinas Kong Mahal."

Dennis Astorga's "

Ako ay Pilipino"

was a fitting finale, with the audience singing with him, "

taas noo kahit kanino, ang Pilipino ay ako."

The Filipino community and the Embassy personnel then partook of a sumptuous *Pinoy breakfast* of

inangag,

longganisa

,

tocino

and eggs. While enjoying their morning meal, the celebration continued, with Filipino community leaders belting out their favorite

kundiman

, accompanied on the piano by Pinoy Jam"s John Florencio.

Ambassador Ortega thanked everyone for their presence and cooperation. END