

The Yuletide season is a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ who, even in circumstances of great adversity, led a selfless and sacrificial life – inspiring humankind to tread the path towards true happiness and satisfaction through acts of giving rather than receiving, and of serving rather than being served.

As we take stock of the accomplishments of the Department of Foreign Affairs with the passage of another year, we are reminded of the obstacles we had to overcome and the opportunities we proactively seized in fulfilling our mandate to provide genuine service to the Filipino nation.

The year 2012 tested our capability as the country's first line of defense in preserving national security and protecting our sovereignty. Since its independence as a sovereign nation, the Philippines has always stood proud before the community of nations as a vanguard for peace. This continues to be so, and amidst challenges to the region's peace and stability, the Department advocated for the peaceful resolution of disputes and adherence to established rules under international law.

The Philippines' robust economic performance throughout the year raised our international credibility and profile as a vibrant and dynamic economic partner. Through the economic diplomacy initiatives of the Department and our Philippine Embassies and Consulates abroad, we made significant contributions in supporting and sustaining the buoyant outlook for the Philippines as an emerging economy.

True to our mandate of protecting our people overseas, we worked tirelessly to ensure that their rights and welfare were preserved at all times. A good number of our personnel have placed themselves in harm's way in order to bring our OFWs home. Consular workers sacrificed long and tedious hours to deliver efficient, prompt and responsive frontline services here at home and abroad.

I thank the men and women of the Department for once again proving equal to the task of serving the Filipino people. It is heartwarming to note that you have carried on the Department's mission with zeal, competence, and compassion.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a New Year of renewed hope and confidence.