

First Batch of Repatriates from Haiti Arrive

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29 January 2010 - The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) welcomed the first batch of six Filipinos who arrived this morning from earthquake-stricken Haiti.

On hand to welcome them were Executive Director Enrico Fos of the DFA Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (first photo, left), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Administrator Carmelita Dimson (first photo, right), DFA-OUWMA Principal Assistant Melvin Almonguera (second photo, standing second from right) and other staff of the DFA-OUMWA and the OWWA.

Doctors from the Philippine National Red Cross were also present to give immediate medical check-ups to the repatriates. Some of the repatriates were welcomed by their families.

The cost of their repatriation were shouldered by the DFA and the Department of Labor and Employment, through OWWA.

A second batch of five repatriates and third batch of 12 repatriates will arrive in Manila in the morning of January 30 and 31, respectively. The schedule of the arrival of the last batch of repatriates comprising of 41 OFWs is still being finalized.

Earlier, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo convened the Philippine Task Force for Recovery, Relief, Assistance and Repatriation in Haiti to review actions taken and map out future plans to assist Filipinos in the earthquake-stricken Caribbean state.

The Task Force also reviewed previous actions taken by the Philippine Government in response to the earthquake.

These include the US\$50,000 humanitarian assistance the Philippines extended to Haiti, as well as the deployment of the Department of Health (DOH)-led medical team to Port-au-Prince.

The 21-man medical team arrived in Port-au-Prince on January 27 and is currently looking after the medical needs of the Haitian people and the Filipino community there. They are currently deployed in a hospital along with a humanitarian team from Miami.

Given the unstable conditions prevailing in Haiti, the medical team's security are provided for by the 10th Philippine Peacekeeping Contingent in Haiti (10th PCH), whose headquarters are near the hospital where they are deployed.

Meanwhile, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Haiti inquired on the possibility of the Philippines deploying a second humanitarian team to Haiti.

The DOH has requested team leader Dr. Emmanuel Bueno of the medical team currently in Port-au-Prince to assess the situation in Haiti and to give recommendations on the possible composition and schedule of deployment of a second team.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo had earlier instructed the DFA and other concerned agencies to extend immediate assistance to the members of the Filipino community in Haiti.
END (Photo by: Benjamin Remo, DFA-PISU)