



Photo of the meeting between H.E. President Tommy Esang Remengesau, Jr. of the Republic of Palau and Maria Theresa P. Lazaro of the Office of Asian and Pacific Affairs of DFA. (From left) Ksaw Whipples; Pacific Division Director Maria Anna Lilia de Vera of DFA; Assistant Palau Minister of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism Umiich Sengebau; and Director Ringsang Rechirei of the Bureau of Labor and Human Resource Environment and Tourism.

## **DFA Undertakes Official Mission to Palau**

Monday, 04 March 2013 11:58

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04 March 2013 - The Office of Asian and Pacific Affairs (ASPAC) of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) undertook an official mission to the Republic of Palau on February 27 to March 01 .

The official mission, headed by ASPAC Assistant Secretary Maria Theresa P. Lazaro, is in line with the mandate of President Benigno S. Aquino III to the DFA to directly manage bilateral relations with Palau following the closure of the Philippine Embassy in Koror on 31 July 2012.

Assistant Secretary Lazaro met with Palauan President Tommy Esang Remengesau, Jr. and other officials of his Cabinet. President Remengesau expressed his government's appreciation for the vital role of the Filipino community in Palau's economic development and nation-building efforts. He also acknowledged the importance of Palau's close friendship with the Philippines and other mutual partners in ensuring the peace and security of the region.

President Remengesau and Assistant Secretary Lazaro discussed a number of important bilateral issues. These include the portability of social security benefits of overseas Filipino workers in Palau and the improvement of the medical referral system between the two countries.

A growing number of Palauan citizens are referred to Philippine hospitals under a special program of the Palau government. On fisheries cooperation, President Remengesau recognised the Philippines' leadership in aquaculture, adding that he hopes for assistance and cooperation in terms of training to develop Palau's fish farming industry.

Assistant Secretary Lazaro, on the other hand, said the Philippine Normal University is ready to offer teacher training programs to Palauan nationals. By training the trainers, Palau will be able to strengthen its education institutions.

Also raised was the pending agreement for the Foreign Service Institute of the DFA to train Palauan diplomats.

She also suggested revisiting the *Memorandum of Understanding on Medical Tourism/Medical Referral and Education and Training in Health*

signed in 2008, in particular, to review the component on training and courses for Palauan professional staff and healthcare managers in the Philippines.

It was agreed that it was necessary for a delegation from Palau to meet with the relevant Philippine agencies and institutions in moving these various bilateral initiatives forward. END



Assistant Secretary Lazaro speaks before the Filipino Community in Palau during an open forum