



COMELEC-COAV Chairperson and COMELEC Commissioner Armando Velasco (left) and DFA-OAVS Vice Chairperson and Ambassador-Designate to Abuja Nestor N. Padalhin (middle) speak before participants during the opening ceremonies of the Training on the Conduct of Overseas Absentee Voting, Counting and Canvassing for Purposes of the 2010 National Elections held at the Heritage Hotel, Pasay City. (photo by: Tony Bosa Jr. DFA-PISU)

24 February 2010 - The Department of Foreign Affairs' Overseas Absentee Voting Secretariat (DFA-OAVS) and the Commission on Elections' Committee on Overseas Absentee Voting (COMELEC-COAV) prepare for the conduct of the May 2010 elections with the Training on the Conduct of Overseas Absentee Voting, Counting and Canvassing for Purposes of the 2010 National Elections.

The three-day training started today and will run until February 26 at the Heritage Hotel, Pasay City.

During the opening ceremonies held today, DFA-OAVS Vice Chairperson and Ambassador-Designate to Abuja Nestor N. Padalhin said that the training participants have a critical role to play in the success of overseas voting.

"You are the ones deputized by COMELEC to perform important and specific election-related functions. The training will be useful for the success in your tasks, as well as the success of the DFA and the foreign service in ensuring honest, orderly and peaceful elections," Ambassador Padalhin said.

Present in the Training are over 100 representatives from the Foreign Service, especially in the Asia Pacific region, which will conduct personal voting. Also attending are Ambassadors-designate to six countries who will assume their posts soon, and two incoming Heads of Consular Posts in the United States.

The participants in this Training will form the Electoral Boards in their respective embassies and consulates. These boards are the Special Ballot Reception and Custody Group (SBRCG), the Special Board of Election Inspectors (SBEI) and the Special Board of Canvassers (SBOC).

For his part, COMELEC Commissioner and COMELEC-COAV Chairperson Armando Velasco emphasized the importance of overseas absentee voters and the tasks ahead of the participants.

"Our overseas Filipinos are considered as our new heroes. Beyond their economic contributions and the sacrifices they do to ensure their families of a good life, they are now also given their political right thru the OAV. It is your task to ensure that their votes are collected, protected and respected," he said.

For the May 2010 elections, there are 589,830 overseas voters certified by the Resident Election Registration Board (RERB) of COMELEC.

The training is the first and the biggest of the trainings which will be conducted before the start of OAV election on April 10.

Aside from the training, COMELEC representatives, supported by DFA-OAVS personnel, will also travel to Los Angeles and Madrid on March 11-13 to conduct training on Postal Voting for Electoral Boards of embassies and consulates in the Americas and Europe, respectively; and to Abu Dhabi and Riyadh on March 18-20 to conduct training on Personal Voting for Electoral Boards in the Middle East and Africa and in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), respectively.

The trainings in these four countries will be attended by over 200 Foreign Service personnel, more than half of whom will be attending from Saudi Arabia (Riyadh, Jeddah and Al-Khobar).

A separate training for the automated election system (AES) in Hong Kong and Singapore will take place in the first week of April 2010. An expert from Smartmatic-TIM is currently on a visit to Hong Kong and Singapore to coordinate with the IT focal points of the two posts, also in preparation for the May 2010 elections.

COMELEC-COAV and OAVS personnel will likewise undertake consultation missions to Hong Kong and Singapore from February 27 to March 5 to ensure that the automated elections in the said countries will run smoothly. END