

03 September 2012

(Delivered by Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Policy Erlinda F. Basilio)

To the Undersecretaries and Assistant Secretaries

To the hardworking officers and staff of the Department

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning everyone.

For the month of September, we join the nation in the observance of the National Peace Consciousness Month. We, at the Department of Foreign Affairs, have every reason to mark this occasion for advancing the culture and peace and for rallying behind a comprehensive peace process in our country.

Through our collective efforts, of which the Department has played a very important role, the Philippines is gaining prominence in the international community. We have been touted as one of the "breakout nations" for the decades to come, and recently made news as the strongest economy in Asia, next to China. Because of President Aquino's thrust for good governance, we have significantly gained investor confidence. With stronger economic diplomacy efforts, we, in the Department, are contributing to the realization of the dream that our country will someday rise as an economic power.

We all know that peace and development are the two sides of a coin. Economic prosperity is meaningless if our people cannot live in peace and harmony.

Peace is a crucial fabric of any progressive society. The theme of this year's Peace Month

celebration, *Ako, Ikaw Tayo, Magkakaiba, Nagkakaisa sa Kapayapaan*, invites us to see the importance of being united towards achieving peace. Ours is a society of people coming from different regions, ethnicity, creed, faith, and ideologies. But our differences should not be our divide, but rather the pieces that make up our collective whole. The key to obtaining peace is the realization that we belong to one country, and that we are one people.

I hope September will be significant to us not only as the beginning of the "ber" months, the start of countdown to Christmas. More importantly, it should be the advent of a realization of something monumental: that each of us, beyond our differences, is key to achieving a just, peaceful, and progressive society. In our own ways as public servants, we should live each day mindful of the gains and promise of peace.

Thank you.