

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND BEST PRACTICES HIGHLIGHT ASEAN PLUS THREE FORUM ON PROBATION

Delegates handling probation and non-custodial measures from different ASEAN member nations pushed for the establishment of international cooperation and development of best practices during the 3rd ASEAN Plus Three Forum on Probation and Community-Based Rehabilitation held on May 19-21, 2015 at the Development Academy of the Philippines in Tagaytay City.

During the three-day forum, participants identified significant factors in developing international cooperation which include interim supervision, transfer of offenders, sharing case information, and review of relevant legislations. Likewise, best practices from some member nations were also reported including those of the Philippines, which were presented by Parole and Probation Administrator (PPA) Administrator Manuel G. Co.

It was also agreed during the forum specifically during the senior officials' meeting that an Ad-Hoc Committee will draft the constitution and by-laws of the ASEAN Plus Three Association. Japan and Thailand signified intention to host the meeting of the committee. Representative of each country also reported on the activities they had undertaken since the 2nd ASEAN Plus Three Forum in Thailand and actions taken by their respective countries for Phase II (Collaboratively Planning) and Phase III (Implementing) of the Roadmap for ASEAN Plus Three Probation and Non-Custodial Measures Cooperation.

Senior officials also adopted a resolution that will put up an ASEAN Plus Three Probation website to provide vital information to current and potential members, clients and more importantly, to market the Association. Thailand was designated to act as the temporary administrator of the website. The 4th ASEAN Plus Three Forum is tentatively scheduled either in 2016 or 2017 with Indonesia signifying intention to host pending the approval of their "big boss".

DOJ Secretary Keynotes the Opening Ceremony

Justice Secretary Leila M. De Lima was the guest of honor during the Opening Program of the 3rd ASEAN Plus Three Forum on May 20, 2015.

In her speech, Secretary De Lima stressed the importance of probation in developing the corrections system of the country. She pointed out that the said forum is timely and significant because it will highlight the good practices of each member-

nation of the ASEAN Plus Three on correction and rehabilitation strategies that are tried and tested to be effective.

Joining Justice Secretary De Lima during the affair was Justice Undersecretary Francisco F. Baraan III. Councilor Violeta C. Parra welcomed the participants on behalf of Tagaytay City Mayor Agnes B. Tolentino. After the speech, local and foreign delegates had photo session with the Secretary. Prior to her speech, Secretary De Lima viewed different rehabilitation activities of PPA in the mini-photo exhibit and other Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials.

Break-Up Sessions

The Opening Ceremony was followed by three break-up sessions in the afternoon. Each group discussed issues and topics in accordance with the draft roadmap of the ASEAN Plus Three Probation and Non-custodial Measures Cooperation. These topics were Developing International Cooperation among ASEAN in the Treatment of Offenders, Development of Strategies and Policies that Affect the Probation and Non-Custodial Measures in Reforming Offenders, and Improvement of Government's Responsiveness to the Probation and Non-custodial Needs. Philippine presenters of the said topics were Regional Directors Lina K. Burdeos (CARAGA), Allan B. Alcala (Region IV-A) and Jeorgette C. Paderanga (Region VII).

Closing Ceremony

The forum ended with a closing ceremony led by PPA Administrator Manuel G. Co and Deputy Administrator Lorna A. Yumul on May 21, 2015 at the Legend Villas in Mandaluyong City. Also present during the ceremony was Mr. Jimmy Isidro, head of Mandaluyong City Public Information Office (PIO) who represented Mandaluyong City Mayor Benhur Abalos, Jr. A brief cultural dance was presented before the foreign delegates and the officials of the PPA. During the program, the foreign participants received their token from Mandaluyong City. Prior to the closing ceremony, the participants went to San Juan City Hall to interact with the Volunteer Probation Aides (VPAs). The Pasig City Parole and Probation Office VPAs led the program where they presented dance numbers to welcome the guests. Members of the media from PTV 4, UNTV, DZMM Channel 2 and IBC 13 also had a press conference with the Administrator. During the press conference, Administrator Co explained the current situation of the country's penal system specifically the jail congestion problem. According to him, the corrections pillar of the Philippine Criminal Justice System (CJS) must adopt measures that will help solve this problem. These measures include among others, improving and developing more strategies in probation and non-custodial measures or community-based rehabilitation. Co also explored on the idea of creating a Corrections Department wherein community-based rehabilitation will be given more attention and focus.

After the interaction with VPAs and the press conference, the delegates were treated to a lunch at the Gloria Maris Restaurant and shopping at the Greenhills Shopping Center. A study tour at the Correctional Institute for Women (CIW) formed part of the activities done during the said day. #~ECL