



The Philippine Tourism Promotion Board (TPB) hosted a reception for the delegates and guests of the Business and Investment Roadshow at Lounge 48 in New York on March 2. In attendance were Philippine ambassador to the U.S. Jose Cuisia, Jr. (far left), Consul General Mario de Leon, Jr. (far right) and TPB Chief Operating Officer Chicoy Enerio (2nd from right). Miss Universe 2015 Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach (2nd from left), Filipino Tourism Ambassador apl.de.ap (center) and “American Idol” runner-up Jessica Sanchez (not in photo) added more fun to the event with their music and dance numbers. (Photo by Wendell Gaa)

The Philippine Business and Investment Forum (PBIF), held in New York on March 3, apart from providing a platform for a wide-ranging discussion of the economic transformation of the Philippines and the issues relating to the sustainability of current growth, also highlighted the world-class Filipino workforce.

And it demonstrated that the Filipino people is the country's greatest resource.

Philippine ambassador to the United States Jose L. Cuisia, Jr. set the stage in his opening remarks as he observed that "President Aquino himself has always said that the source of his bullishness on the Philippines even before it regained economic prominence is the Filipino people."

In his keynote address, former Trade and Industry Secretary Gregory Domingo emphasized the importance of the large, young Philippine population of 100 million with a median age of 23.

He characterized this as a vital demographic advantage that can be leveraged with proper investments in education and infrastructure.

In the panel discussion on manufacturing and the strengths of the Filipino workforce, Department of Trade and Industry Undersecretary Nora K. Terrado emphasized the quality, scalability and, most importantly, unique traits intrinsic to Filipino workers that underscore compassion and stewardship in the work they do.

The high-caliber of the Filipino worker was further validated by the narration of Integrated Micro-Electronics, Inc. (IMI) President & CEO Arthur Tan on the lower average defects per million opportunities, for products produced, in the manufacture of semiconductors by workers at IMI's Philippine manufacturing facilities.

Other speakers also spoke about the quality and reliability of the Filipino as worker and partner, and all the representatives of the participating investment promotion agencies, such as Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority and Clark Development Corporation, ranked the workforce high in their respective value propositions.

In his closing remarks at the end of the PBIF, Ambassador Jose Maisto, President of the US-Philippines Society, likewise referred to the Filipino workforce as being of “high quality; valued for their skills, adaptability, loyalty, and their sense of purpose is incredible.”

Even the welcome reception hosted by the Department of Tourism and the Tourism Promotions Board was a celebration of the Filipino.

The gathering that took place on the eve of the PBIF, at the “48 Lounge” on the Avenue of the Americas, was well attended, and was truly a fiesta of fun, music and color.

The highlight of the event was the arrival of Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach, the elegant and articulate Filipina who is also the reigning Miss Universe.

Wurtzbach, who is most known for the phrase, “confidently beautiful with a heart,” graciously spoke of the beauty of the Philippines and the Filipino people as she invited the foreign guests to visit the country.

She also gamely “put it out there” that it would be nice if she can pass the crown to the new Miss Universe next year in a pageant that would be held in the Philippines.

Guests were also treated to song numbers by Filipino-American rapper apl.de.ap, and “American Idol” runner-up, Filipina-American singer Jessica Sanchez.

Cuisia thus noted that “the talent, quality, commitment and excellence of the Filipino were at the forefront of the PBIF this week, whether in the performances at the welcome reception, in the narratives of the keynote speakers, or in the stories of the various panelists.”

“The choice of its more fun in the Philippines, therefore, as the theme for the last panel of the

Forum was very deliberate,” he added.

The last panel on tourism was composed of Tourism Undersecretary Benito C. Bengzon, Jr.; Chairman Eliseo B. Santiago of the Clark Development Corporation; Rosanna Tuason Fores, President of the Tourism Congress of the Philippines; and Jeffrey Hentz of Finn Partners.

It was moderated by Terry Dale, President of the US Tour Operators Association (USTOA).

Aside from exploring creative ways of boosting the industry and tourist arrivals into the Philippines, the discussion also touched on the important role of the Filipino people in tourism, and ensuring that tourism continues to contribute to inclusive growth.

“Its more fun in the Philippines, and our companies know that well,” declared Alexander Feldman, President of the US-ASEAN Business Council in his keynote address.

Dale summed it all up in two words at the end of the panel: human capital.

“My work with USTOA brings me around the world frequently, and to many destinations. But each time that I am welcomed by a Filipino staff, I immediately know that my experience will be elevated to a level that I have never experienced previously,” he told the audience at the PBIF.

There is always that “quiet presence,” he added.