

MESSAGE OF UNDERSECRETARY CIRIACO A. LAGUNZAD III

14TH Conference of Philippine Schools Overseas

17 May 2016, 8:00AM, Diamond Hotel, Manila

Theme: K to 12 and the PSO Community—the Best is Yet to Come

[GREETINGS]

Good morning esteemed guests and participants of the 14th Conference of Philippine Schools Overseas. This year's theme, K to 12 and the PSO Community—the Best is Yet to Come, highlights the value of the K to 12 as one of the key reforms in basic education and the key role that Philippine Overseas Schools will play to ensure that every graduate is ready for employment, entrepreneurship or further education.

Together with the Philippine Qualifications Framework, career Guidance Advocacy, and the Enhanced Phil-Jobnet, the K to 12 Program is one of the key reform initiatives under the Convergence Program among DOLE, DepEd, CHED and TESDA to address jobs-skills mismatch where existing job vacancies in the country remain unfilled despite the fact that many are unemployed and continue to seek for work.

The goal is clear – invest in our human resources, make them employable and competitive – and one of the key strategies to do that is through cohesive education and training programs that seek to produce a workforce equipped with industry-relevant skills and competencies. This is evident in the increased strategic investment in human capital development with the growing budget allocation for social services which include health, education and training from 28.2 percent of the total budget (GAA) to 37.1 percent.

Quality basic education, combined with industry-responsive training programs and reforms in higher education, is crucial in ensuring that we produce highly skilled and competitive human resources in the future. The full implementation of K-12 Law is expected to enhance quality of basic education by: (1) extending the basic education cycle from 10 to 12 yrs, allowing sufficient time for the mastery of concepts and skills and placing the Philippine education curriculum at par with international standards; and, (2) removing the bias against technical-vocational courses by interacting skills training and certification at secondary education level.

All government efforts and resources are in full swing to ensure full implementation of the K to 12 program. Apart from providing the necessary inputs such as classrooms, school seats and textbooks, the concerned agencies including DOLE have put in place various measures such as adjustment programs to mitigate the impact of K to 12 program on higher education institutions and its personnel.

Complementing these reforms is the strategy to forge stronger partnerships with industries, particularly those identified as key employment generators, to facilitate faster school-to-work transition. This practice has resulted to the continuing review and issuance of new industry-driven policies, standards and guidelines in higher education, and revisions of our basic education and training curricula leading to more responsive workforce development program. Government scholarship grants both in technical

training and higher education are allotted to priority disciplines that intend to address skills shortages and mismatch.

We have a long way to go in the K to 12 implementation and benchmarking with best practices in other countries can guide us in improving our education and training systems.

In Asia, Japan, Singapore and China have notable practices worth checking. In China, for example, when a teacher discovers that a student has a special aptitude in say math, he/she is required to attend special classes and tutorials in the subject. This is exactly I understand this idea why we have tracks in our K to 12 Program. When a student is good in a specific discipline then zone him or her in that discipline.

Japan's K to 12 education program is worth mentioning as well for encouraging their kids to go to technical or trade schools. In Singapore, teachers play a key role in ensuring that focus is given to developing a child's learning ability so that he/she will not lag behind.

To achieve the results we have envisioned under the K to 12, it is imperative that all stakeholders contribute their share. As part of the Philippines Schools Overseas, you are our partners in the implementation of the program to guarantee that Filipino children and youth receive quality basic education that in turn will link them to better achieve full potential opportunities in the future.

According to the UN population projections, the Philippines is poised to hit a demographic sweet spot that will last approximately for the next 35 years. This potential opportunity will only yield positive results for us if we are able to shape the quality of our future workforce.

The future that we want is clear. We want to develop and build a Filipino workforce capable of competing in a fast changing and evolving labor market characterized by technological and other changes that shorten the shelf-life of existing skill sets/knowledge unfortunately.

With reforms like K to 12 in place, we can look forward with optimism that our future human resources will be ready and have the adaptive capacity to survive, to excel decent and productive work. Indeed, we can say the best is yet to come.

Magandang umaga at maraming salamat.