CHICAGO, 12 August 2019 – The Philippine Consulate General in Chicago successfully held the 1st Philippine Retirement Summit in the U.S. Midwest, which culminated in the Forum on Retirement, Social Security and Housing Services for the Filipino-American Community held at Elston Place Market Mix Community Center at Seafood City, Chicago on 10 August 2019.

The Consulate organized the forum, the first ever in the U.S. Midwest, to inform Filipinos in the Midwest of the retirement services and facilities, social security benefits, housing and investment opportunities they can avail of in the Philippines. The forum also served as on-site venue for Social Security System (SSS), Pag-IBIG, Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA) and real estate inquiries.

Top officials and executives from the Philippine Consulate, Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA), Social Security System (SSS), Home Development Mutual Fund (Pag-IBIG), One Ayala (Ayala Corporation, Ayala Land, Bank of the Philippine Islands, El Nido Resorts), Vista Group Realty, Megaworld International and PNB Remittance Center spoke at the forum. Close to 200 participants, including leaders and members of Filipino community organizations in the Midwest, gathered in Chicago to learn more about the Philippine retirement industry, update their SSS and Pag-IBIG accounts, invest in real estate and investment funds, and secure housing and other loans.

Consul General Gina A. Jamoralin (right) speaks before a huge crowd of participants at the Forum on Retirement, Social Security and Housing Services as part of the 1st Philippine Retirement Summit in the U.S. Midwest in Chicago, Illinois on 10 August 2019. (All photos courtesy of the Philippine Consulate)
In her opening remarks, Consul General Gina A. Jamoralin highlighted the dynamic and sustainable Philippine economic growth, which is now recognized as the fastest in Asia. She noted that at the core of this expansion is the Philippines’ $160-billion “Build, Build, Build” infrastructure program, which propels the growth momentum as more investors pour in funds for infrastructure projects. The Philippines is also now considered a top country to invest in. She shared a video on the accomplishments and ongoing projects in the Build, Build, Build initiative, in line with the awareness campaign of the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C. being led by Ambassador Jose Manuel Romualdez.

Speakers from the government (L-R): PRA General Manager Bienvenido Chy, SSS President Aurora Ignacio, SSS International Operations Head Joy Villacorta, and Pag-IBIG Member Services Officer Michael Azucena
In his keynote address, PRA General Manager and CEO Atty. Bienvenido K. Chy pitched the Philippine retirement industry as one of the prime retirement destinations in Asia. The goal of the PRA is to attract to overseas Filipino and foreign retirees and become a home for the world — a retiree’s paradise and investor’s haven. He noted the huge potential of this sunshine industry in attracting retirees from the Midwest to the Philippines.

In their remarks, SSS President and CEO Aurora C. Ignacio and SSS International Operations Head Joy A. Villacorta provided an overview of the new Social Security Act of 2018, and urged Filipinos in the Midwest to enroll and update their social security accounts. They conveyed that the interests and needs of the pension fund’s members are their top priority. PNB Remittance Center Assistant Vice President Butch Odulio provided an overview of PNB’s services in remitting SSS and Pag-IBIG contributions and benefits. She noted that regardless of the immigration status (whether Filipino or former Filipino), the person can still avail of SSS membership and services as long as they are former SSS members.

Home Development Mutual Fund (Pag-IBIG) Member Services Officer Michael F. Azucena shared the services and investment opportunities in Pag-IBIG fund, including low-interest housing loans and high-yield investment instruments members can avail of.

After their remarks, the speakers replied to the queries and comments from participants in an interactive Q&A session. Many participants expressed interest in retiring in the Philippines and asked about the Special Resident Retiree’s Visa (SRRV). PRA (through Mr. Mervin Magbuhat and Ms. Ketslynn Quiletorio), SSS (Ms. Marites Marin) and Pag-IBIG (Mr. Azucena) also serviced clients throughout the day in booths set up at the back of the community center.

In the second part of the program, speakers from One Ayala (Mr. JP Orbeta and Ms. Trina Aguas), Vista Group Realty (Mr. Jasohn Chavez), and Megaworld International (Mr. Eric Dimaiwat) presented the products and services being offered by real estate and allied firms for retirees in the Philippines. Mr. Orbeta, Managing Director of Ayala Corporation, shared the diverse offerings of the conglomerate, from real estate (Ayala Land International Sales) to banking (BPI), resorts (El Nido Resorts), education and healthcare. Mr. Chavez urged participants to invest in real estate property in the Philippines. Ms. Aguas provided an overview of the projects of Ayala Land International Sales. Mr. Dimaiwat, Assistant Vice President at Megaworld, expounded on the various condominium, hotel and housing projects of Megaworld throughout the Philippines. Mr. Orbeta, Ms. Aguas and Mr. Dimaiwat also replied to questions posed by participants. One Ayala and Megaworld International also provided services and addressed inquiries from numerous participants through their booths.

Consul Melchor M. P. Lalunio provided a briefing on the Philippine accession to the Apostille Convention, and how it affects the documentary requirements for SSS, Pag-IBIG and real estate transactions. Dr. Melissa Palma of the Cook County Health Department invited participants to participate in the 2019 Chicago Asian Health Survey to better understand and address the health concerns and needs of the Filipino-American community.

Before ending, Consul General Jamoralin awarded certificates of appreciation to the speakers and event partners. With the huge turnout and interest for more information on the Philippine retirement industry, the Consul General, speakers and partners vowed to organize a similar event in August next year with the inclusion of other relevant agencies. END
Speakers from the private sector (L-R): Ayala Corp. Managing Director JP Orbeta, PNB Remittance Center AVP Butch Odulio, Vista Group Realty Broker Jasohn Chavez, Megaworld International AVP Eric Dimaiwat

Left photo: Pag-IBIG’s Michael Azucena (2nd from left) replies to a question from the audience as (left to right) PRA’s Mervin Magbuhat and SSS’s Aurora Ignacio and Joy Villacorta look on. Right photo: Participants ask questions as lunch is being served.

Consul General Jamoralin (4th from left) poses with speakers of Retirement Summit events (left to right): Mervin Magbuhat, Michael Azucena, JP Orbeta, Aurora Ignacio, Eric Dimaiwat, BPI SVP Noel Tagaza, and Ayala Land Regional Head Trina Aguas.
Consul General Jamoralin (middle, front row) poses with other speakers event partners: (front row, L-R) Megaworld’s Eric Dimaiwat, SSS’s Joy Villacorta, PRA’s Ketslynn Quiletorio, SSS’s Tess Marin, (second row, L-R) PNB’s Butch Odulio, PRA’s Mervin Magbuhat, Pag-IBIG’s Michael Azucena, and One Ayala’s JP Orbeta.

(L) Consul Melchor Lalunio (left) discusses the Philippine accession to the Apostille Convention. (R) Dr. Melissa Palma invites participants to join the 2019 Chicago Asian Health Survey.

Consul General Jamoralin (6th from left) poses with the event partners from the government and private sector.
Consul General Jamoralin (2nd row, 8th from left) poses with some of the participants of the event.

SSS (left) and PRA (right) serve clients in their respective booths at the forum.

Pag-IBIG (left) and Philippine Consulate officials (right) serving clients at their respective booths.
One Ayala (left) and Megaworld International (right) officers at their respective booths.

Participants watch the “Build, Build, Build” video presentation intently.

Left photo: Dr. Palma (seated, left) assists a participant become a respondent of the Chicago Asian Health Survey. Right photo: Consulate officials pose with Filipino community leader Tito Ruben Salazar (2nd from left) and Grill City personnel as pancit, lumpia and tupig are served as snacks to forum participants.