

## Message at the Kabataan (Youth) Jobs and Alternatives to Migration

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Ambassador of Spain

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His Excellency President Benigno Simeon Aquino III  
Ms. Jacqueline Badcock, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations  
Mr. Lawrence Jeff Johnson, Director of the International Labor Organization  
Mr. Leon G. Flores III, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the National Youth Commission

*Magandang umaga, buenos días, good morning*

It is a great honor and a pleasure for me to join you today in this International Youth Day Celebration 2011 held in the Philippines. Since 1999 August 12 has been known as International Youth Day owing to the United Nations General Assembly backing. Each year a theme has been associated with it and events take place worldwide in celebration of young people. The idea behind this UN awareness day is to draw attention to youth issues, to youth development and youth participation, to capture the energy and spirit of motivated young people, and celebrate our commitment to them.

I wish to highlight Spain's full commitment with this momentous celebration and to express my Government's support to the World Programme of action for Youth. In this framework, allow me to mention that, days from now, my country will be hosting the World Youth Day. Thousands of young people will be gathering in Madrid for the 26th World Youth Day alongside Pope Benedict the 16th. Nearly 4000 Filipinos will attend this event of great significance. World Youth Day will provide the opportunity for the ones attending to celebrate their faith but also to emphasize unity in diversity as it will be open to all regardless of religious convictions and therefore will connect with the UN International Youth Day in commemorating the passion and energy of youth across the globe.

We all recognize that youth are key agents of socio-economic development and technological innovation, they are the bearers of the next generation and our own future is ours as it is theirs. The best way to understand and address youth concerns and issues is to give youth a voice through facilitation of their active participation. Providing a voice for youth in society however requires tackling prior key issues such as equality and access to opportunities. Both are prerequisites for the ability to influence and play an active role in all spheres of society.

In the Philippines, where average population age is 22, the debate on youth policies is timely and of the utmost importance. Spanish Development Cooperation in the Philippines wishes to strengthen the Philippines' ongoing efforts to enhance youth development and employment, particularly through the support for the Government's vision of a more productive and competitive youth.

I am proud to say that Spain supports already the Filipino youth and contributes to Government-led youth policies and programs by providing the funds to the UN Joint Programme titled “Alternatives to Migration, Decent Jobs for Filipino Youth”. A three year endeavor, it aims to guarantee decent work opportunities for Filipino youth, as an alternative to migration, an objective of crucial importance for the sustainable development of the Philippines.

As we very well know in Spain from our experience in the twentieth century, migration provides a significant source of income through remittances. However, it also means the country’s loss of its most skilled and talented human beings and of a work force, which is vitally important for its development. In this manner, employment opportunities should enable a nation’s most precious resource, to stay in their home country if they wish to.

The Joint Programme attempts to contribute to the development of the most far-flung and vulnerable regions of the Philippines and thus to avert the negative impact of massive migration on big cities, namely overcrowding, crime and the abandonment of rural areas, which are key to a country’s economy and its food reservoir.

I seize the opportunity here to pay my tribute to the Philippine Government for its vision and leadership and particularly to the Department of Labor and Employment and to NEDA in charge of the overall coordination of the Joint Programme, as well as to United Nations Country team as the main execution partner.

Spain has invested in the Philippines more than 1.8 billion pesos per year in grants for the last five years. This amount reflects primarily Spanish Cooperation’s unwavering support and commitment with the development of the Philippines. As a consequence, the Philippines ranks as one of the main beneficiary countries of the Spanish-UNDP Trust Fund for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG-F) set up in 2006. Under the MDGF, four Joint Programs are already under way in the Philippines which amount to an investment of 17 million Euros.

Dear friends, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend my congratulations to the youth who are the engines of growth and development in this country. I am no longer, unfortunately, what you could call a youngster. However, I fully realize that many of you are right now shaping your personal and professional future. Looking ahead, you face daunting challenges but you also have tremendous opportunities in this global information age that you are lucky to call your age. You are bound to play a prominent role in your society. Do not rest assured we know our part but remind us of it. We are obliged to you as we want you to be able to rise to the challenges and we also expect your constructive and effective participation for the sake of your individual and collective future, for the future of the generations to be.

Let me summon them to rise to their best of their abilities for their well-being and for the advancement of society. Let me convey to them that we want to share their burden to build a better future. For that purpose, I will take the license of quoting the first lines from a poem of Dr. José Rizal entitled “A la Juventud Filipina” or “To the Filipino Youth”.

(Original Spanish Version)

Alza su tersa frente,  
Juventud Filipina, en este día!  
Luce resplandeciente

Tu rica gallardía,  
Bella esperanza de la Patria Mia!

(Translated Tagalog Version)

*Itaas ang iyong malinis na noo*  
*Sa araw na ito, Kabataang Pilipino!*  
*Igilas mo na rin ang kumikinang mong*  
*Mayamang sanghaya*  
*Magandang pagasa nang Bayan kong Mutya!*

*Maraming salamat, muchas gracias.*