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**PRESIDENT GMA TO ADDRESS
PHILIPPINES DEVELOPMENT FORUM**
Vice President Noli De Castro to Open the Session

MANILA, March 25, 2008 – The country’s two top officials will address the 2008 Philippines Development Forum (PDF) to be held on March 26 and 27 in Clark Field, Pampanga. The annual event will be **opened by Vice President Noli de Castro** and **keynoted by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo**.

With the theme, “Accelerating Inclusive Growth and Deepening Fiscal Stability”, the forum will be hosted and chaired by the Philippine government and co-chaired by the World Bank.

The PDF, which evolved from the Consultative Group meetings of the past, has become the Government's primary mechanism for facilitating policy dialogue among the stakeholders in the country's development agenda. It also serves as a venue for forging consensus and generating commitments among stakeholders on key actionable items of the Government's reform agenda. This year’s meeting is the fourth PDF meeting since its establishment in 2005.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, Chair of the PDF, said he is looking forward to an interesting engagement with the different stakeholders: *“The PDF is a collaborative effort to push our development agenda forward. As in the past years, the PDF will be a mechanism that will help focus development assistance on the country’s priority programs and coordinate efforts among development partners, the private sector and civil society.”*

Attending the PDF are Government and its development partners. Also invited are representatives from the legislature, the judiciary, and local government units. Delegates from civil society, the academe, business groups, and other groups from the private sector are also expected to share their views on key policy issues related to the country's overall development program.

Co-Chair of the PDF and World Bank Country Director for the Philippines, Bert Hofman, said, “This year’s PDF theme is highly appropriate, as recent high growth should not only be sustained, but also be made more inclusive in order to reduce poverty, which remains high despite more rapid growth.”

Scheduled to speak at the forum, among others, are Finance Secretary Margarito Teves who will discuss the government's fiscal reforms, Trade Secretary Peter Favila on the country's investment climate, NEDA Director General Augusto Santos on the Government's Comprehensive Infrastructure Investment Program, and Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral on Social Inclusion. Businessman Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, Chairman and CEO of Ayala Corporation and Fr. Francis Lucas, Chairman of the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC), are also expected to speak.

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For more information on the Philippines Development Forum, please visit the website <http://pdf.ph>