

Committee on Tourism
Joint with
**Committees on Civil Service and Government Reorganization,
Ways and Means and Finance**

*17 December 2004, Friday
2:04 pm – 4:09 pm
Senator Claro M. Recto Room, Second Floor
Senate of the Philippines, Pasay City*

MEMBERS/SENATORS PRESENT: Senators Richard J. Gordon (Chair, Committee on Tourism) and “Bong” Revilla, Jr. (Vice-Chair, Committee on Tourism)

GUESTS/RESOURCE PERSONS: Ms. Cecile Guidote Alvarez (Executive Director, National Commission for Culture and Arts), Ms. Emilie V. Tiongco (Deputy Executive Director, National Commission for Culture and Arts), Atty. Nicolas Pichay (Legal Counsel, National Commission for Culture and Arts), Mr. Felipe De Leon, Jr. (National Commission for Culture and Arts), Ms. Corazon S. Alvina (Director IV, National Museum), Mr. Dennis N. Marasigan (Assistant Vice President, Cultural Center of the Philippines), Ms. Laurice Guillen-Feleo (Chairperson, Film Development Council), Ms. Prudenciana C. Cruz (Director IV, National Library), Ms. Nita P. Buenaobra (Commission on the Filipino Language), Mr. Jose Marcelo, Jr. (Deputy General Manager, Philippine Retirement Authority), Atty. Joel V. Mayo (Department Manager, Philippine Retirement Authority), Atty. Noel R. Del Prado (Legal Officer, Philippine Amusement & Gaming Corporation), Ms. Emelita Almosara (National Historical Institute), and Mr. Efhraim C. Genuino (Chairman, Philippine Amusement & Gaming Corporation).

AGENDA:

SBN 1834 – “*AN ACT* DECLARING AND IMPLEMENTING A NATIONAL POLICY FOR TOURISM AS THE PRIMARY ENGINE OF INVESTMENT, EMPLOYMENT, GROWTH AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND PROVIDING NECESSARY INCENTIVES THEREFOR” (*Introduced by: Senator Gordon*)

HIGHLIGHTS

Before proceeding to the main agenda, the Chairman emphasized that Section 56 of the proposed measure would give flesh and meaning to the principle enunciated by the cultural agencies of the country. He said that the National Commission for Culture and Arts (NCCA) sits on a Tourism Coordinating Council (TCC), together with some other departments and agencies relevant to tourism development.

Senator Gordon emphasized that there is a need to unify all cultural agencies in the country so they could work together for one goal. He further stated that in order to maximize the implementation of laws and programs in tourism industry it is necessary to put linkages with other government agencies and private offices. He also added that to firm up the provisions of the measures, it has been modified by the private sector in order to strengthen further its provisions and expand its marketing and promotions

coverage to include controls on the collection of taxis and monopoly of ownership of tourism establishments. It will also look at the extent of default it committed in the implementation of its primary function of providing support to special institutions and beneficiaries of the tourism industries.

Ms. Emelita Almosara, deputy executive director of the National Historical Institute (NHI), expressed the support of the NHI for the proposed measure. She cited some situations wherein the Department of Tourism (DOT) and her agency are really together in the sense that in all historical events, NHI undertakes, the DOT is either the Chairman or the Co-Chairman. She then cited the Rizal Day Celebration on 30 December and 12 June Independence Day Celebration as examples.

For her part, Ms. Prudenciana C. Cruz, director of the National Library (NL) stated that if the proposed measure would enhance the National Library's functions, she suggested that something must be done about their current budget allocation of P10 million, considering that they have to maintain more than 1,000 public libraries with said very meager budget.

The Chairman remarked that the reason why the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) appropriated for less budget allocation to NL is because the Senators, Congressmen, the President and the Executive Departments could not see the concrete steps and relevance of the National Library's functions in line with the history, culture, and arts of the country. He stressed that the NL present mandate does not help tourism industrial development. He also added that they have so many requirements that cause a lot of inconveniences to the domestic and international tourists and discourage tourists from coming back to the National Library, he pointed out.

Senator "Bong" Revilla, Jr. also agreed with the observations made by Senator Gordon. Senator "Bong" Revilla, Jr. lamented the lack of institutional memory. He then suggested that efficient and effective system of communication and coordination should be undertaken to improve the relations of the different tourism industries / associations.

Mr. Dennis N. Marasigan, assistant vice president of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) also expressed his support to the position of Senator Gordon that the culture needs and concerns be elevated to the Executive Branch, and probably bringing it to the Cabinet level.

Executive Director Cecile G. Alvarez, of the National Commission for Culture and Arts stated that tourism would not flourish without culture.

On the other hand, Ms. Laurice Guillen-Feleo, chairperson of the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP), emphasized that in order to attract more potential film producing countries, something must be done about removing some restrictions about getting a permit as this would boost tourism and even be good for the new film makers. She added that specific policy changes needed to foster a favorable policy environment for peace and order situation in the country must be adopted and implemented.

Mr. Efraim C. Genuino, head of the Philippine Amusement & Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) who also agreed with the proposed measure, stated that PAGCOR is now embarking on different tourism projects and one of these projects is

the proposed entertainment city in the reclamation area, and the development of Clark as well. For easy coordination and establishment of support mechanism, he suggested that PAGCOR be made a member of the Tourism Enterprise Zone Authority (TEZA) Board and be part of the Tourism Coordinating Council in order to support all the projects of the tourism industry.

Atty. Joel V. Mayo, of the Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA), said that the proposed measure is laudable as it amplifies favorable policy on tourism industry.

Commenting on the measure under consideration, commissioner Felipe De Leon, Jr. of the National Commission for Culture and Arts, expressed his support for the bill but ventilated his concern about conflict that may arise noting that the three basic components of cultural industry in tourism could be classified into: a) the spiritual, b) secular, and c) the materialistic commercial sector.

The Chairman further stated that whether its "spiritual" or "materialistic", cultural industries makes no difference. What is paramount, he said, is the policy changes to be extended by the proposed measure to expand the trade flow of any tourism industry. He however stressed, that necessary values should be considered promptly: culture, arts and history.

Ms. Nita P. Buenaobra, head for the Commission on the Filipino Language, also agreed with the proposed measure, likewise, she suggested that the Commission be made a member of the Philippine Tourism Board. She further explained that the present day commitment of the Commission involves enormous amount of funds to better respond to such changes.

The Chair then adjourned the public hearing.

It was 4:09 p.m.