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NEWS RELEASE

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OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS STILL IN DEMAND IN 2010 AND BEYOND

The Middle East will continue to be the major labor market of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in 2010, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration revealed today in a report called OFW Deployment Trend Outlook for 2010 and Beyond.

Reports from various Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs) of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and Philippine embassies and consulates abroad show that the Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have major projects for 2010 and beyond in construction, energy, industry, petrochemicals, power, water, transport, health, food, tourism, retail, energy, telecommunication, production, distribution and services, banking, education, operation and maintenance and Information technology (IT) sectors.

POEA Administrator Jennifer Jardin-Manalili stated that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the primary destination of OFWs, is embarking on its medium to long term socio-economic development plans until 2024. This includes the development of 12 mega industrial/economic cities across the Kingdom.

The POEA also identified the following sectors as sources of employment opportunities for Filipino workers in the next 5 to 10 years: healthcare, building and construction, energy, tourism, information and communication, manufacturing, electronics and metals, transport, services, education, environment and shipping.

According to the POEA, skilled workers and professionals will continue to be in demand despite the global financial crisis and might even expand in the medium to long term when the global economy bounces back.

Asia, the 2nd largest regional destination of OFWs, will continue to hire skilled workers and professionals given the development plans of Asian countries to widen their

economic base. Malaysia's economy, especially the petroleum sector, for instance, continues to thrive despite the negative effects of the global crisis. Development plans will cover new infrastructure projects in transport and communication, tourism development, public housing, healthcare services and public utilities in the energy sector.

Singapore, which has been severely affected by the global financial crisis in 2009, is expecting a sharp recovery of its economy in 2010. It plans to become a leading global city in Asia and knowledge capital.

The report cited that for the next 10 years, *Japan* will promote employment of highly skilled foreign workers in healthcare, agriculture, manufacturing, construction and machine assembly. However, due to the effects of the global crisis, Japan has relayed to the Philippines that it will hire only around 60 nurses and 101 caregivers in 2010 for the 2nd batch of health workers under the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement.

Taiwan's comprehensive medium term development plan will create 700,000 jobs in the next 5 years, around 210,000 jobs of which will be offered to foreign workers in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Workers in demand in Asia are engineers, teachers, operators, health workers, welders, pipe fitters and riggers, plantation workers, service workers, IT specialists, manufacturing and hotel and gaming workers, IT and financial workers, and those in the healthcare, construction, ship building and repair sectors.

The **Oceania** region, particularly *Australia*, needs skilled construction workers, health and IT professionals, teachers, hotel and restaurant workers, among others. Australia reportedly suffers from a shortage of 31,000 nurses, Australia wide. Discussions have been initiated with Australia on the recognition of qualifications of Filipino nurses to facilitate access to employment opportunities in this labor market. The Philippines is set to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with South Australia on labor cooperation early this year.

However, as Australia and New Zealand are currently affected by the global economic crisis, priority is given to the employment of its nationals.

The *United States* has a critical shortage of healthcare professionals, particularly nurses. A 2003 report by the US Department of Health and Human Services has cited that vacancies for registered nurses nationwide are projected to grow to 275,000 by 2010 and to over 800,000 by 2020. However, the US has a current visa retrogression policy for EB3 visas.

With the expected world economic recovery in 2010, *Canada's* demand for temporary workers is projected to increase as more people will be going out of Canada's workforce within the next two years. In the medium to long term period, Canada's ageing workforce, perennial shortages and technological advances will increase the need for nurses and other healthcare workers. By 2011, there is a projected 78,000 unfilled jobs in nursing which is expected to reach 113,000 by year 2018.

Guam will need construction workers for the planned transfer of the military base from Okinawa, Japan to Guam in the next 5 years, starting 2010. However, recruitment for Guam might start later than previously expected due to recent developments affecting the US and Japan on the issue of a replacement facility for the Futenma Marine Base in Okinawa.

Europe faces a labour shortage due to a rapidly ageing population and declining workforces, hence plans are underway to facilitate the entry of high skilled workers while restricting the entry of low skilled workers in the medium to long terms.

The *United Kingdom* has identified skills shortages for professionals in the healthcare, construction and engineering, education tourism sectors, among others. Studies show that a real shortage of nurses and care workers will occur before 2012. Nurses in demand are those in specialized fields such as operating theatre nurse, anaesthetic nurse, critical care nurses, scrub nurse, etc. Other EU countries like *Spain, Sweden and Finland, Czech Republic*, however, still currently face high unemployment due to the global recession.

Nonetheless, there are emerging employment opportunities for third country nationals in the next five years in Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Italy, France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and other parts of Europe like Norway and Iceland due to the EU Blue Card Directive which is now in effect and will open the labor market to highly skilled workers and professionals in the fields of engineering, information technology, medicine, and nursing.

The African region, on the other hand, is a potential market for Filipino skilled workers and professionals in the next 5 years. Libya needs workers for its oil and gas and healthcare sectors. Cameroon and Seychelles plan to recruit more teachers over the next five years. South Africa will host the 2010 World Cup of Soccer which will involve the hiring of skilled workers in the construction fields particularly engineers and project managers.

Access of OFWs to these global job opportunities will depend on job orders that the Philippine licensed recruitment and manning agencies can secure from foreign employers in these industries, the POEA concluded. ###