



## Message of the Chairman of the Philippines-France Business Council



**Anthony T. Huang Jr.**

The Philippines-France Business Council (PFBC) was established as a forum to strengthen trade links and investment cooperation between our two countries. As evidenced by the success of the trade and investment promotion mission we led to France just last September 2013, we remain steadfast in our commitment to actively deepen our economic ties and foster greater friendship among our enterprises and people.

At present, there is palpable optimism in the Philippines. Our economic indicators and fundamentals have been reported to remain on the positive track, as they have been for the past few years. Owing to the prudent management of economic fundamentals, in 2013, the Philippines has finally achieved investment grade ratings from Fitch, Standard & Poor's (S&P), and Moody's—with both Fitch and S&P awarding the country a "stable" outlook, and Moody's giving a "positive" outlook.

We believe that the recently increasing confidence in the country can be largely attributed to two factors. First, the country's fiscal house is very stable, thanks to the capable leadership of its economic managers, particularly Secretaries Purisima and Domingo, Bangko Sentral Governor Tetangco, and our other partners in government.

Second and more importantly, we now have an administration that is serious in its drive to weed out corruption in our bureaucracy and institutionalize a culture of accountability across all levels of government. Persons of utmost integrity and professionalism have been appointed to key places in power, while those with questionable character have been removed from their posts, with some already facing charges in our courts. Furthermore, systems to ensure transparent and competitive government procurement, as well as careful management of public resources, are also being put in place.

The PFBC, as lead representative of the private sector in the pursuit of bilateral economic cooperation, looks forward to deepen its partnership with the government in the promotion of the Philippines as the ideal investment destination for our expanding global business network. Coming off the heels of a successful trade mission to Paris and Bordeaux, we welcome 2014 and reaffirm our commitment to sustain the momentum for French business and investment opportunities in the Philippines.

While the Philippines celebrates the gains achieved in the last three years and looks forward to the promise of an even more robust economic expansion and stronger drive towards inclusive growth, the PFBC is aware that maintaining this upward trajectory is still anchored on the strength of our bilateral partnerships. It is in this context that we embrace this new year as another opportunity for reinforcing collaboration between our countries and enterprises. ■

A quarterly publication of the Philippines-France Business Council, the **PFBC Newsletter** provides the latest socio-economic updates, as well as news on developments in trade and investments between the two countries.

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# MBC

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THE FORUM FOR CONSTRUCTIVE IDEAS

## French business group to conduct trade mission to Manila

The Mouvement des Entreprises de France (Movement of the Enterprises of France, or MEDEF), the biggest employers network in France, is looking to visit Manila for a trade and business opportunities mission within the first half of April 2014, according to economic counselor Gilles Vernet of the French Embassy in the Philippines.

The MEDEF business mission takes after the successful trade and investments promotion mission headed by Finance Secretary Cesar V. Purisima and the Philippines-France Business Council last September 2013. French companies joining the MEDEF business delegation are mainly involved in infrastructure, distribution, transportation, and communications, reflecting the

*French business group to conduct trade...*



# MEDEF

Finance, the Philippine Economic Zone Authority, and Public-Private Partnership Center, to gain insights on the current Philippine business climate, as well as further opportunities for investments and possible joint venture

same business industry interests from last year's Philippine business delegation.

The French delegation hopes to meet with government agencies, such as the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of

partnerships. MEDEF also looks forward to interact with the Philippine private sector through networking sessions with local business groups and organizations.

French Ambassador to the Philippines, His Excellency Gilles Garachon is optimistic that the incoming mission will serve to further increase economic ties between the two countries.

MEDEF is an international business organization with approximately 800,000 members, consisting mostly of small and medium enterprises, making it the top representative of the French private sector in the global market. It has recently touted the Philippines as one of France's priority countries for trade and business partnerships, due to the former's rosy economic prospects. ■

## PH successfully expands air service agreement with France

The Philippine Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) has recently concluded air service panel talks with France last January 14-15, which will bring about the finalization of an expanded air service agreement between the Philippines and France. The previous agreement, signed in 1969, allowed the Philippines to mount only four flights a week to and from France. The Philippine air service panel requested for at least 14 flight entitlements, but both air service panels agreed to update and expand the air service agreement to 7 flights per week between both countries, as per the initial limit proposed by the French side.

The expanded air service agreement will allow Air France to operate from Paris to Manila via Amsterdam using KLM as its operating carrier. According to CAB Executive Director Carmelo Arcilla, this will enable the Philippines to "reestablish links between the Philippines and other European nations," as well as to pave a more direct entryway into the European travel and tourism market.

Philippine Airlines (PAL) has shown considerable interest restarting its flight operations to France, looking to fly back to

Paris for the first time since the flag carrier ceased its Manila-Paris direct route in 1998.

PAL has already started its nonstop flights into Europe, having launched its direct Manila-London route last November 2013. It also has plans to service other European routes, with the Philippines having signed a new air agreement with Italy that allows 14 flights per week. ■



*Photo from www.bizdaily.com.sg*

## French private sector streamlines relief and rehabilitation efforts in wake of Typhoon Yolanda

Last December 2013, French Ambassador to the Philippines, His Excellency Gilles Garachon, spearheaded the founding of the France-Philippines United Action, a private sector initiative geared towards organizing, coordinating, and sustaining the French government and private sector's relief and rehabilitation efforts in lieu of typhoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan). At the helm of the initiative is Mr. Don H. Lee, President of Lafarge Cement Services (Philippines), Inc. Join-

ing Mr. Lee to lead the efforts are Mr. Cyril Roche, President of the French Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines, Mr. Philippe Gauthier, President of the Conseillers du Commerce Extérieur (CCEF), and Mr. Anthony T. Huang, Jr., Chairman of the Philippines-France Business Council.

As of December 2013, the value of donations from the French government and French enterprises, as well as other

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organizations, has reached US\$15 million. More assistance, in cash and kind form, is expected to come from the French private sector, which will be coursed through the France-Philippines United Action.

In an official statement, the initiative's private sector leads have concluded that "the effectiveness and impact of the programs undertaken by [our] French donors, NGOs, and French Agencies would greatly benefit from a coordinated effort and communications amongst each other, to include private organizations in France, such as L'Union des Chambres de Commerce et d'Industrie Françaises à l'Etranger (UCCIFE) and the Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF). With the support of the French Embassy, and by sharing resources and information, we will provide better visibility, better access to relevant decision-makers, and allocate our resources where they are most needed."

Key activities of the France-Philippines United Action thus far include, but are not limited to, the following:

- coordination and integration of pertinent information for the benefit of the French community willing to participate in relief and rehabilitation efforts;

- regular communication to and from the France-Philippines United Action network on updates and progress of the initiative's assistance;
- developing interaction between donors, assistance beneficiaries, NGOs, and the affected communities to improve relief and rehabilitation operations;
- actively engaging the local government and other private sponsors in development and reconstruction projects (in partnership with qualified NGOs and other such local groups).

France-Philippines United Action is also recognized as an official partner organization of the Department of Social Welfare and Development of the Philippines, Philippine Red Cross, Gawad Kalinga, Habitat for Humanity, and Médecins Sans Frontières.

Full, detailed information on the initiative's updates, activities, projects (current and completed), its other partners and benefactors, as well as its contact details, may be found on its website at <http://www.frenchunitedaction.ph>. ■



Photos from French Embassy

## Join the Philippines-France Business Council!

The PFBC was established in 1998 to promote trade and investments between the Philippines and France. The council is composed of top business executives who seek to explore business opportunities between the two countries and to promote the exchange of views on policies of mutual concern. The Makati Business Club serves as the secretariat of the PFBC

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