

RP wins new three-year term in UN body

by **JEROME ANING**
Inquirer.net

MANILA—The Philippines was reelected to another three-year term in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc), garnering the biggest number of votes among the 18 countries that won seats in the 54-member body.

Ambassador Hilario Davide Jr., the country's permanent representative to the UN, reported to Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo that the Philippines received 185 votes to allow it to continue serving in Ecosoc until 2012.

Davide credited the reelection

to the country's active participation and substantive contributions to the policy work of the body since 2007.

The Philippines also topped the 2006 elections for its 2007-2009 term. The country's current term ends on Dec. 31 this year.

Other countries reelected to Ecosoc were Iraq, Canada and the United States. Elected to new terms were Bangladesh, Mongolia, Belgium, Italy, Slovakia, Ukraine, Argentina, the Bahamas, Chile, Comoros, Egypt, Ghana, Rwanda and Zambia.

Membership in Ecosoc is based on geographical representa-

tion with 14 seats allocated to Africa, 11 to Asia, 6 to Eastern Europe, 10 to Latin America and the Caribbean, and 13 to Western Europe and other areas.

Ecosoc, currently chaired by Luxembourg, is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations. It is responsible for promoting a higher standard of living and full employment; identifying solutions to international economic, social and health problems; facilitating international cultural and educational cooperation; and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. ■

DoH on lookout for outbreak

A(H1N1) cases hit 5,212

by **ANNA VALMERO**
Inquirer.net

MANILA—A total of 5,212 A(H1N1) influenza cases were monitored in the country between April and October 18 with 30 deaths, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said.

Although the global community was alerted again of the possible A(H1N1) outbreak when United States President Barack Obama placed the disease as a national emergency, Duque said Filipinos should not worry because the country's own national health system—with containment, mitigation, and monitoring measures in place—can handle the situation.

"We are constantly monitoring our A(H1N1) cases in the country and with 30 deaths in 5,212 cases, we can say that the case fatality rate is 0.6 percent or below the global case fatality rates of 1.2 percent. There is no need for hyper alertness because we have seen 99 percent of our cases have fully recovered and our measures are effective. But we are ready," said Duque.

Since April, the health department through the Research Institute of Tropical Medicine is conducting random testing case samples to identify a possible "second-wave outbreak." If symptoms and signs get more serious in test cases, this might signal that the virus has mutated into a deadlier form.

Five of the country's general hospitals can test for and admit A(H1N1) cases including San Lazaro Hospital, RITM, Lung Center of the Philippines, Davao

General Hospital, and Vicente Sotto Memorial Center in Cebu in addition to several private hospitals, said Duque.

The health chief added that his department has signed an agreement with the World Health Organization to be notified once the vaccines are available so it can order P100 million worth of vaccines good for at least 100,000 cases.

DoH started talks with China and the United States, two of the countries known to manufacture A(H1N1) vaccines to place orders for the country's vulnerable sectors including children, elderly, pregnant women, and people with pre-existing medical condi-

tions, said Duque.

However, China and the United States expressed that they cannot promise to allocate vaccine supply for other countries because their production turnout is insufficient for their own population of vulnerable sectors, he said.

DoH said incoming travelers from wintering countries will be subject to quarantine if they register fever in thermal scans at international and domestic airport terminals.

Duque urged Filipinos to cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing, and to regularly wash their hands to prevent the spread of diseases. ■

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