

**Remarks by Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, Jr.
Aquino Fellowship Award Ceremony
As Prepared For Delivery
August 9, 2010**

- Ms. Ballsy Aquino Cruz,
- Aquino Fellows and representatives of the Aquino Foundation,
- Dear Friends

Magandang hapon sa inyong lahat. Welcome to the 21st annual award ceremony for the Ninoy and Cory Aquino Fellowships. I am pleased that all of you could join us at this special event.

Twenty-one years ago, the U.S. Embassy partnered with the Aquino Foundation to establish this special award in recognition of outstanding accomplishments and potential in the fields of journalism and public service. This fellowship provides to the awardees a three-week professional exchange program in the United States.

As its name suggests, this award also honors the late Senator Ninoy Aquino's contributions to the fields of journalism and public service and late President Cory Aquino's contributions to strengthening Philippine democratic institutions. Just last week, here in the Philippines and around the world, millions of people paid tribute to the late President Cory on the one-year anniversary of her death. We honor her memory today as well.

The Filipino people have always had a special gift for looking forward. Today we honor two leaders—Ms. Yvonne Chua and Ms. Toix Cerna—who do much to further our optimism about the future. Toix heads the research department of the Transparency and Accountability Network, which tries to tackle corruption and government waste. We have seen that, for current President Aquino, there is no higher priority than rooting out corruption, and he will need the support of leaders like Toix. Yvonne is co-founder of VERA Files, a non-profit media

organization that conducts in-depth reporting on some of the country's most challenging stories. In a time when Philippine journalists face significant risks, Yvonne's dedication and courage is much admired.

Today, we all take inspiration from the hope that a new Aquino in Malañcanang brings to the Philippines and to the world. But hope requires many friends to become reality, and much hard work. As this fellowship program indicates, *kasama tayo sa pagbabago*. These two honorees remind us that passionate dedication brings success and the capacity to inspire others as we are inspired by the Aquino legacy.

This afternoon, let us celebrate the impressive careers of these two remarkable leaders who truly follow the example of courage and commitment set by Cory and Ninoy Aquino. It is our hope that this fellowship contributes to their future successes.

Maraming salamat sa inyong pagdalo at mabuhay.