

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Constitution Hills, Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5146



INTRODUCED BY REP. MACNELL M. LUSOTAN

**AN ACT CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS FILIPINOS, DEFINING
ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,
RATIONALIZING THE ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT
AGENCIES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In 2018, around 10 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) remitted more than \$28 billion to their families, stimulating economic activity here in our country and accounting for almost 10% of our Gross Domestic Product. Beyond their economic contributions, the Overseas Filipino Worker, in his decades of existence, has been woven into the fabric of our culture.

Unfortunately, our government continues on its *ad hoc* solutions to problems. Both on policy and implementation, OFWs have to deal with an alphabet soup of agencies to get the chance to make their families' lives better, or worse, secure assistance in some foreign land.

This state of affairs is tolerable when the OFW returns home, victorious in his gamble. Then he has the fruits of his labor to be shared with his loved ones, a sweet reunion, and a bright future when he may excuse the inefficiencies of government in addressing his needs.

Unfortunately, when he finds himself beaten, abused, and alone in a foreign land, or when victimized by his own countrymen as he sought to fulfill his dreams, then he will have to deal with a bureaucratic nightmare of offices, commissions, departments, and agencies to find redress. Every single office has its own mandate which may overlap with other units, rendering the OFW a victim once more, this time of red tape.

And in my bill, I specifically mentioned our seafarers, my constituents and a special class of OFWs. Alone in the high seas, they must face the troubles which beset all other OFWs, but with no embassy or consulate within easy reach.

Let us give all our OFWs what they deserve – a clear, coherent policy on overseas Filipinos, implemented properly, with a coordinated response to all possible exigencies. This can be achieved with the creation of a department which is attuned to their unique situation and organized for them alone.

It is for this reason that I enjoin my colleagues in the House to support the passage of this bill.


REP. MACNELL M. LUSOTAN
MARINO Party-list

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AN ACT
CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS FILIPINOS, DEFINING ITS
POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,
RATIONALIZING THE ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT
AGENCIES RELATED TO MIGRATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

CHAPTER 1
GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. Short Title.- This Act shall be known as the “Department of Overseas Filipinos Act of 2019”.

SEC.2 Declaration of Policies-

(a) In the pursuit of an independent foreign policy and while considering national sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest and the right to self-determination paramount in its relations with other states, the State shall, at all times, uphold the dignity of its citizens, whether in country or overseas, in general and Filipino migrant workers, in particular, continuously monitor international conventions, adopt/be signatory to and ratify those that guarantee protection to our migrant workers, and endeavor to enter into bilateral agreements with countries hosting overseas Filipino workers;

(b) The state shall afford full protection to OFWs, promote full employment, ensure equal work opportunities regardless of sex, gender, race, creed or religion, regulate the regulations between OFWs and their employers, and promote their welfare and well-being at all times. The State shall protect the rights of the workers to security of tenure, and just and humane conditions of work. Towards this end, the State shall provide adequate and timely social, economic, and legal services to OFW;

(c) While recognizing the significant contribution of Filipino migrant workers and overseas Filipinos to the national economy through their foreign exchange remittances and investments, the State does not promote overseas employment as a means to sustain economic growth and achieve national development, The existence of the overseas employment program rests solely on the

assurance that the dignity and fundamental human rights and freedoms of the Filipino citizens shall not, at any time, be compromised or violated. The State therefore shall continuously create local employment opportunities and promote the equitable distribution of wealth and the benefits development. Toward this end, the State shall continually aim to make migration a choice and not a necessity for every Filipino worker;

(d) The State affirms the fundamental equality before the law of women and men and the significant role of women in nation building. Recognizing the contribution of overseas migrant women workers and their particular vulnerabilities, the State shall apply gender sensitive criteria in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs affecting migrant workers and the composition of bodies tasked for the welfare of migrant workers;

(e) Free access to the courts and quasi-judicial bodies and adequate legal assistance shall not be denied to any person by reason of poverty. In this regard, it is imperative that an effective mechanism be instituted to ensure that the rights and interests of distressed overseas Filipinos, in general, and Filipino migrant workers, in particular, whether regular/documented, are adequately protected and safeguarded;

(f) The right of Filipino migrant workers and of all overseas Filipinos to participate in the democratic decision-making processes of the State and to be represented in institutions relevant to overseas employment is recognized and guaranteed;

(g) The State recognizes non-governmental organizations, trade unions, workers associations, business organizations and other stakeholders duly recognized as legitimate, as partners of the State in the protection of Filipino migrant workers and in the promotion of their welfare. The State shall cooperate with them in spirit of trust and mutual respect. The significant contribution of recruitment and manning agencies shall form part of this partnership;

(h) The State shall protect every citizen desiring to work locally or overseas by securing for him or her the best possible terms and conditions of employment. The State shall endeavor to facilitate a free choice of available employment by persons seeking work and regulate the movement of workers in conformity with the national interest;

(i) The State further affirms that the Filipino family, as a basic autonomous social institution, is the foundation of the nation. Accordingly, the solidarity of the families of OFWs shall be strengthened and their total development shall be actively promoted;

(j) The State shall endeavor to fulfill its commitment in the fulfillment of the 23 objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

SEC 3. Definition of Terms-

- a) *Act* refers to the “Department of Overseas Filipino Act”;
- b) *Authority* refers to any document issued by the Secretary authorizing the officers, personnel, agents, or representatives of licensed recruitment/manning agency to conduct recruitment and placement activities as a private recruitment entity;
- c) *Irregular/D=Undocumented Filipino Migrant Workers* refers to the following:
 - (1) Those who acquired their passports through fraud or misrepresentation;
 - (2) Those who possess expired visas or permits to stay;
 - (3) Those who have no travel documents whatsoever;
 - (4) Those who have valid but inappropriate visas; or
 - (5) Those whose employment contracts were not approved by the Department.
- d) *License* refers to the document issues by the Secretary authorizing a person, partnership or corporation to operate a private recruitment/manning agency;
- e) *Manning Agency* refers to any person, partnership or corporation duly licensed by the Secretary to engage in the recruitment and placement of seafarers for ships plying international waters and for related maritime activities;
- f) *Non-License* refers to any person, partnership or corporation engaged in the recruitment and placement of overseas Filipino workers without a license, or whose license has been revoked, cancelled, terminated, has expired or otherwise delisted from the roll of licenses recruitment/manning agencies registered with the Department;
- g) *Overseas employment* refers to employment of a worker outside of Philippines;
- h) *Overseas Filipino* refers to migrant workers, other Filipino nationals, and their dependents abroad, including Filipinos who are permanent residents abroad;
- i) *Overseas Filipino Worker or Migrant Worker* refers to a Filipino who is to be engaged, is engaged, or has been engaged in remunerated activity in a state which he or she is not a citizen, or on board a vessel navigating the foreign seas other than a government ship used for military or non-commercial purposes or an installation located offshore or on high seas. A “person to be engaged in a remunerated activity” refers to an applicant worker who has been promised or assured employment overseas;
- j) *Overseas Filipino Worker in Distress* refers to an Overseas Filipino Worker who has a medical, psycho-social or legal assistance problem requiring treatment, hospitalization, counselling, legal representation, or any kind of intervention with the authorities in the country where he or she is found;
- k) *Private Recruitment/Employment Agency* refers to any person, partnership or corporation duly licensed by the Secretary to engage in the recruitment and placement of workers for overseas employment for a fee which is charged, directly or indirectly, from the workers who renewed their employment contracts with the same principal;

- l) *Regular/Documented Overseas Filipino Workers* refers to the following”
- (1) Those who possess valid passports and appropriate visas or permits to stay and work in the receiving country; and
 - (2) Those whose contracts of employment have been approved by the Department
- m) *Seafarer* refers to any person who is employed or engaged in overseas employment in any capacity on board a ship other than a government ship used for military or non-commercial purposes. The definition shall include fisher folk, cruise ship personnel, and those serving on mobile offshore and drilling units in the high seas;
- n) *Secretary* refers to the Secretary of the Department of Overseas Filipinos and Migrant Workers;

CHAPTER II

THE DEPARTMENT PROPER

SEC 4. Creation-The Department of Overseas Filipinos, hereinafter referred to as the Department, is hereby organized, structurally and functionally in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

The Department is hereby created to serve as the primary agency under the Executive Branch tasked to promote the welfare of overseas Filipinos; formulate, plan, coordinate, promote, administer, implement policies and undertake a systematic national development program for managing and monitoring the overseas/foreign employment of Filipino workers, including seafarers, domestic helpers, skilled and unskilled workers taking into consideration domestic manpower requirements and the need to protect their rights to fair and equitable employment practices.

The Department shall render an annual report of its activities and achievements to the President and to Congress. In addition, it shall have original and exclusive jurisdiction over all cases involving employer-employee relations, documented/regular or undocumented/irregular workers, arising out of or by virtue of any law or contract involving Filipino workers for overseas employment.

SEC. 5. Powers and Functions- In pursuit of its mandate, the Department shall have the following powers and functions:

- (a) Formulate, recommend, and implement national policies, plans programs, and guidelines that will ensure the protection of Overseas Filipinos and Migrant Workers, and address the problems that they face abroad in consultation with all relevant stakeholders;

- (b) Conduct in-depth studies on all policy areas and options that will ensure protection of OFW and address perennial issues OFWs face abroad, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders;
- (c) Assess, review, harmonize and coordinate all OFW-related local policies and procedure and international agreements to ensure overall consistency and implementation of the national policies;
- (d) Protect and promote the interest of every citizen desiring to work overseas by securing for him/her the most equitable terms and conditions of employment and by providing social and welfare services;
- (e) Protect and promote the welfare, well-being, and interests of the families of OFWs;
- (f) Formulate general guidelines concerning wage and income policy subject to the limitations imposed by the laws of the foreign countries;
- (g) Build a strong and harmonious partnership with foreign countries and the private sectors to formulate strategies and implement the same;
- (h) Assess, review harmonize and coordinate applicable policies and procedures, as well as multilateral or bilateral treaties and agreements with OFW countries of destination and other migrant countries of origin, the United Nations and its affiliate organizations, and other international and regional organizations, fora, and processes, in coordination with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA);
- (i) Represent Philippine interest and negotiate on matters pertaining to overseas Filipinos and migrant workers in international bodies, in coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Labor and Employment;
- (j) Be the primary agency in countries of destination in charge of Overseas Filipino and Migrant Workers concerns under the control and supervision of the head of Post in the person of the Ambassador or Consul General following the One Country Team Approach (OCTA);
- (k) Employ a proactive approach in providing assistance to the Overseas Filipinos and Migrant Workers in times of war, civil unrest or other analogous circumstances, whether potential or actual;

- (l) Assist and provide timely assistance to Overseas Filipinos and Migrant Workers in distress and, for this purpose, tap the services of local and foreign-based personnel, lawyers, labor experts, security providers and other professionals;
- (m) Provide social and welfare services to OFWs, including insurance, social work assistance, legal assistance, cultural services, and remittance services;
- (n) Provide job matching services to the public, in cooperation with the Department of Education, the Commission on Higher Education, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, and other government agencies, civil society and non-governmental organizations, with the view of promoting the global competitiveness of the Filipino;
- (o) Promote knowledge, information and resource sharing, and develop a database to assist Overseas Filipinos and Migrant Workers anywhere in the world;
- (p) Coordinate and support the generation and build-up of resources or funds for the use of Overseas Filipinos and Migrant Workers;
- (q) Coordinate with concerned government agencies in the training and support of Filipinos who have worked abroad and are returning to the country;
- (r) Regulate and guide the business activities relative to the deployment of Filipino workers and other related activities;
- (s) Regulate the operation of private recruitment agencies and other relevant business entities involved in the deployment of OFW taking into account the primacy of upholding the welfare and protection of OFW, and with due consideration to relevant market conditions;
- (t) Assist in the professionalization, training and capacity building of private recruitment agencies, and recognize their freedom of association for the purpose of self-regulation, raising accountability and effective representation, and the adoption of a code of ethical conduct among its members, and provide a system of incentives therefor; and
- (u) Promulgate rules and regulations for the implementation of its guidelines and policies and related laws.

SEC. 6. Composition- The Department shall consist of the Department proper comprising the Office of the Secretary, the Office of the Undersecretaries and Assistant Secretaries, the Service Units and the Staff Bureaus, and its Regional Offices.

The Secretary shall be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Committee of Appointments. The Undersecretaries and Assistant Secretaries shall be likewise appointed by the President upon recommendation of the Secretary.

SEC 7. Secretary of the Department of Overseas Filipino- The authority and responsibility for the exercise of the mandate of the Department and for the discharge of its powers and functions shall be vested in the Secretary of Overseas Filipinos, herein referred to as the Secretary, who shall have supervision and control over the Department. For such purposes, the Secretary shall have the following powers and functions:

- (a) Establish the policies and standards for the operation of the Department pursuant to the approved programs of government;
- (b) Exercise jurisdiction over all bureaus, offices, agencies and corporations under the Department as are provided by law, and in accordance with the applicable relationships as specified in Chapters 7,8, and 9 of the Administrative Code of 1987;
- (c) Delegate authority for the performance of any function to officers and employees of the Department;
- (d) Advise the President on the promulgation of executive and administrative orders, other regulative issuances, and legislative proposals on matters pertaining to foreign labor and employment;
- (e) Formulate policies, guidelines, rules and regulations and others issuances essential and necessary to carry out Department policies, plans, programs and projects;
- (f) Issue orders, directives, rules and regulations, and other issuances to carry out foreign labor and employment policies, plans, programs and projects;
- (g) Coordinate with other government offices, labor, organizations, employers' associations, and any other group to carry out the mandate of the Department;
- (h) Negotiate with foreign governments in coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs treaties, agreements, compacts, and other instruments that are related to labor migration;
- (i) Evaluate the policy, plans, programs and project accomplishments of the Department;
- (j) Prepare reports for the President and for the public;
- (k) Administer and manage the Overseas Filipino Assistance Fund, and issue guidelines for the proper utilization of the fund; and
- (l) Exercise such powers and functions as may be provided by law or assigned by the President.

SEC. 8. Department Units.- The following units are hereby created to be each headed by an Assistant Secretary and assisted by other officers and staff:

- a. The Policy, Planning, Research and Legal Affairs Unit which shall:

1. Undertake research necessary in preparation and evaluation of policy reports, treaties, and multilateral and bilateral agreements;
 2. Assist and draft policies in line with the functions of the Office of the Secretary of the Department;
 3. Ensure that development policies are in line with national development;
 4. Analyze data in order to make informed decisions and to guide policy intervention with regard to migration and foreign employment;
 5. Ensure collection of accurate and quality statistics to conduct analysis of the changes in the labor and foreign market;
 6. Advise and assist the Secretary and the Undersecretaries in the formulation of the Department's over-all-range and short-term plans and programs on overseas employment, with special focus on the government's compliance with international labor agreements;
 7. Reviews and evaluates the progress/status of projects and accomplishments in relation to set standards, objectives and schedules; and
 8. Perform such other functions as may be provided by law or assigned by the Secretary and/or Undersecretaries from time to time.
- b. Administrative Unit which shall provide the Department with efficient, effective and, economical services relating to records, management, supplies, equipment, collections, disbursements, building administration and maintenance, security, and custodial work;
 - c. Human Resource Development Unit which shall provide the Department with a program and corresponding projects that shall make available training, education, and development opportunities needed to upgrade the levels of competence and productivity of Department managers and personnel. It shall absorb the powers and functions of the Administrative Service in relation to the development and administration of personnel programs including selection and placement, development, performance evaluation, employee relations, and welfare;
 - d. Financial Management Unit which shall be responsible for providing the Department with efficient, effective, and economical service relating to budgetary, financial, management improvement, and internal control matters;
 - e. Information and Publication Unit which shall be responsible for promoting rapport and understanding between the Department and the public through the development of public relations programs and dissemination of accurate and updated information on foreign labor and employment, by means of publication, radio, television, and social media coverage of special events and related matters on the Department's policies, plans, programs, and projects. The service shall likewise be responsible for providing answers to queries from the public regarding the Department's policies, rules, regulations, programs, activities, and services; and

- f. The Overseas Filipinos Assistance Fund Unit which shall be responsible for assisting the Secretary in the management and use of the Overseas Filipino Assistance Fund.
- g. ***THE FILIPINO SEAFARERS (MARITIME PROFESSIONALS) UNIT WHICH SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING FULL PROTECTION IN RECOGNITION OF SEAFARERS' UNIQUE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.***

SEC. 9. Undersecretaries. - The Secretary shall be assisted by not more than six (6) Undersecretaries who shall be appointed by the President upon the recommendation of the Secretary. The following offices are hereby created to be each headed by an Undersecretary and assisted by other officers and staff:

- a. Office of the Undersecretary for Administration and Finance which shall provide the Department with efficient, effective and, economical services relating to records, management, supplies, equipment, collections, disbursements, building administration and maintenance, security and custodial work; administer personnel programs including selection and placement, development, performance evaluation, employee relations, and welfare; manage internal budgetary and financial matters. The Office shall supervise the operational activities of the Administrative Unit, Human Resource Development Unit and the Financial Management Unit;
- b. Office of the Undersecretary for Foreign Employment which shall absorb the mandates and functions of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration under Executive Order 247 s. 1987 and Republic Act No. 8042, as amended, and shall have the following additional functions:
 - 1. Advise and assist the Secretary in the formulation of the Department's over-all long-range and short-term plans and programs on overseas employment, with special focus on the government's compliance with international labor agreements;
 - 2. Review and evaluate the progress/status of projects and accomplishments in relation to set standards, objectives and schedules;
 - 3. Supervise the operational activities of the Policy Planning, Research and Legal Affairs Unit, and the Information and Publication Unit; and
 - 4. Perform such other functions as may be provided by law or assigned by the Secretary from time to time.
- c. Office of the Undersecretary for Reintegration and Social Services which shall absorb the mandates and functions of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration under Republic Act No. 10801, implement and deliver programs and services through regional and on-site operations and shall have the following additional functions:
 - 1. Develop support programs and projects for livelihood, entrepreneurship, savings, investment and financial literacy for returning Filipino overseas migrant workers and

- their families, in coordination with relevant stakeholders, service providers and international organizations;
2. Coordinate with appropriate stakeholders, service providers and relevant international organizations for the promotion, development and the full utilization of the skills and potentials of returning overseas Filipino workers;
 3. Institute, in cooperation with other government agencies concerned, a computer-based information system on returning Filipino overseas migrant workers which shall be accessible to all local recruitment agencies and employers, both public and private;
 4. Provide a periodic study and assessment of job opportunities on returning Filipino overseas migrant worker;
 5. Develop and implement other appropriate programs to promote the welfare of returning Filipino overseas migrant workers;
 6. Maintain an interest-based communication system for on-line registration of returning OFWs and interaction with clients, and maintain and upgrade computer-based service capabilities of the Department;
 7. Develop capacity-building programs for returning overseas Filipino workers and their families, implementers, service providers and stakeholders;
 8. Conduct research for policy recommendations and program development; and
 9. Undertake other programs and activities as may be determined by the Department.
- d. Office of the Undersecretary for Overseas Filipinos which shall have the following functions:
1. Formulate, in coordination with agencies concerned an integrated program for the promotion of the welfare of Filipinos overseas for implementation by suitable existing agencies;
 2. Coordinate and monitor the implementation of such as integrated program;
 3. Initiate and directly undertake the implementation of special projects and programs, whenever necessary, to promote the welfare of Filipinos overseas with respect to their interest and activities in the Philippines;
 4. Serve as a forum for preserving and enhancing the social, economic and cultural ties of Filipinos overseas and with their motherland;
 5. Provide liaison services to Filipinos overseas with appropriate government and private agencies in the transaction of business and similar ventures in the Philippines; and
 6. Perform such other functions as may be provided by law or assigned by the Secretary from time to time.
- e. Office of the Undersecretary for Assistance to Overseas Filipinos in Distress which shall have the following functions:
1. Provide prompt and appropriate response to global emergencies or crisis situations affecting OFWs and their families;

2. Recommend to the Secretary the grant of the use of Overseas Filipinos Assistance Fund;
 3. Draft the guidelines, procedures and criteria for the provisions of Overseas Filipinos Assistance Fund to Overseas Filipino and Migrant Workers;
 4. Ensure effective coordination and cooperation with other agencies and the Foreign Service Posts in the provision of assistance from the Overseas Filipinos Assistance Fund to Overseas Filipino and Migrant Workers; and
 5. Supervise the operational activities of the Overseas Filipinos Assistance Fund Unit.
- f. Office of the Undersecretary for International Labor Affairs which shall have the following functions:
1. Monitor the observance and implementation of the Philippines' obligations and commitments to international organizations and treaties;
 2. Supervise and monitor the activities of the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices;
 3. Coordinate with the Department of Foreign Affairs regarding treaties, agreements, compacts, and other instruments that are related to labor migration; and
 4. Perform such other functions as may be provided by law or assigned by the Secretary.

SEC. 10. Regional Offices. – The Department shall hereby authorize to establish, operate, and maintain such Department-wide Regional Offices in each of the administrative regions in the country, insofar as necessary, which shall be headed by a Regional Director who shall have supervision and control thereof. The Regional Director, whenever necessary, shall be assisted by an Assistant Regional Director. A Regional Office shall have, within its regional area, the following functions:

- (a) Implement laws, policies, plans, programs projects, rules and regulations of the Department;
- (b) Provide economical, efficient and effective service to the people;
- (c) Coordinate with regional offices of other departments and agencies;
- (d) Coordinate with local government units; and
- (e) Perform such other functions as may be provided by law or assigned by the Department.

SEC. 11. Qualifications. – No person shall be appointed Secretary, Undersecretary, or Assistant Secretary of the Department unless he or she is a citizen and resident of the Philippines, of good moral character, of proven integrity and with competence and expertise in the plans, programs, projects and activities of the government relative to overseas labor and employment.

SEC. 12. Sectoral Industry Task Forces. – The Department may create sectoral and industry task forces, technical working groups, advisory bodies or committees for the furtherance of its objectives, Additional private sector representatives, such as from the OFWs, academe and private industries directly involved in deployment of OFWs, as well as other national government units and government-owned and controlled corporations, may be appointed to these working groups,

SEC. 13. OFW Malasakit Center. -The Department, in partnership with other government agencies and local government units, shall establish a one-stop shop OFW assistance center to be known as “ OFW Malasakit Center” in all provinces and major cities to ensure prompt and efficient provision of services to OFWs and their families such as acquisition of government permits, validation of overseas job offers, grievance and complaints desks and reintegration services.

CHAPTER III

TRANSFER AGENCIES

SEC. 14. Transfer of Bureaus, Offices and Agencies. – (a) The following agencies are hereby abolished, and their powers and functions under Republic Act 8042 as amended by RA 10022 and other applicable laws and the funds and appropriations, records, equipment, property, and personnel are likewise transferred to this Department:

- (1) Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA);
- (2) Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA);
- (3) Commission on Filipino Overseas (CFO);
- (4) International Labor Affairs Bureau of the Department of Labor and Employment and
- (5) National Reintegration Center for OFWs.

The powers and functions of the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs under the Department of Foreign Affairs and all Philippines Overseas Labor Offices and their officials under the DOLE are hereby transferred to this department.

In the case of OWWA, all its funds whether appropriated under the GAA and all its trust funds are transferred to this Department.

The law and rules on government reorganization as provided for by Republic Act 6656, otherwise known as the Reorganization Law and other relevant civil service laws and regulations shall govern the reorganization process of the Department.

CHAPTER IV

TRANSITORY PROVISIONS

SEC. 15. New Structure and Pattern. -Upon the approval of this Act, the relevant officers and employees of the transferred entities under Section 13 of this Act shall in a hold over capacity, continue to perform their respective duties and responsibilities and receive the corresponding salaries and benefits unless in the meantime they are separated from government service as may be provided by law.

Subject to the approval of the Department of Budget and Management, the Department shall, within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act, determine its organizational structure, staffing pattern, operating system, and create new divisions or units as it may deem necessary, and

shall appoint officers and employees of the Department in accordance with the civil service law, rules and regulations.

SEC. 16. Absorption or Separation from Service of Employees of the Consolidated Agencies. – The existing employees of the agencies transferred under the Department shall enjoy the security of tenure and shall be absorbed by the Department, in accordance with the new staffing pattern and organizational structure as provided for in Section 14 of this Act, and the selection process as prescribed under Republic Act No. 6656, otherwise known as the “Government Reorganization Law”.

Employees opting to be separated from the service as a consequence of the consolidation and reconstitution under the provisions of this Act shall within one (1) month from their separation or phase from service, receive separation benefits in accordance with existing laws. In addition, those who are qualified to retire shall be allowed to retire and be entitled to all benefits provided, under any of the existing retirement laws.

SEC.17. Rationalization and Other Transitory Provisions. – In the transfer of entity of functions as prescribed in the Act, the following rules shall be provided:

(a) Any transfer of entities shall include the functions, appropriations , funds, records, equipment, facilities, other properties, assets, and liabilities of the transferred entity as well as the personnel thereof as may be necessary, who shall, in a hold over capacity, continue to perform their respective duties and responsibilities and receive the corresponding salaries and benefits, unless in the meantime they are separated from government service pursuant to existing laws, Those personnel from the transferred entity whose positions are not included in the new position structure and staffing pattern approved by the Secretary or who are reappointed shall be entitled to benefits provided in the second paragraph of Section 15 hereof;

(b) Any transfer of functions which results in the abolition of the entity that has exercised such transferred functions shall include, as may be necessary to the proper discharge of the transferred functions, the appropriations, funds, records, equipment, facilities, other assets and personnel of the entity from which such functions have been transferred. The remaining appropriations and funds shall revert to the General Fund and the remaining records, equipment, facilities, and other assets shall be allocated to such appropriate units as the Secretary shall determine or otherwise shall be disposed of, in accordance with the pertinent laws, rules and regulations. The liabilities, if any, of the abolished entity shall be treated likewise in accordance to pertinent laws, rules and regulations. Incumbents of the abolished entity shall, in a hold over capacity, continue to perform their respective duties and responsibilities and receive the corresponding salaries and benefits unless in the meantime they are separated from government service pursuant existing laws. Any such personnel whose position is not included in the new

position structure and staffing pattern approved by the Secretary or who is not reappointed shall be entitled to the benefits provided in the second paragraph of Section 15 hereof; and

(c) Any transfer of functions which does not result in the abolition of the entity that has exercise such transferred functions shall include the appropriations, funds, records, equipment, facilities, other assets as well as the personnel of the entity from which such functions have been transferred that are necessary to the proper discharge of such transferred functions. The liabilities, if any, which have been incurred in connection with the discharge of the transferred functions, shall be allocated in accordance with the pertinent laws, rules and regulations. Such personnel shall, in a hold over capacity, continue to perform their respective duties and responsibilities and receive the corresponding salaries and benefits unless in the meantime they are separated from the government service pursuant existing laws. Any such personnel whose position is not included in the new position structure and staffing pattern approved by the Secretary or who is not appointed shall be entitled to the benefits provided in the second paragraph of Section 15 hereof.

CHAPTER V

THE OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS IN DISTRESS AND ASSISTANCE FUND

SEC. 18. Overseas Filipinos Assistance Fund. – The Legal Assistance Funds provided for under Section 25 of Republic Act No. 8042, as amended, is abolished. In its stead an Overseas Filipinos Assistance Funds to address the needs of regular and irregular OFWs in distress, and those OFWs returning to the Philippines for good, in the amount of Five Billion Pesos (5,000,000,000) is hereby created. The fund shall be allocated for the following purposes:

- (a) Repatriation;
- (b) Legal assistance including litigation expenses, legal fees, payment of translation fees, attendance in court hearings;
- (c) Defraying necessary expenses and making payments for the life-saving rescue medical and hospitalization expenses, retrieval, and rehabilitation of OFWs in distress, as needed;
- (d) Basic necessities of OFWs in emergency situations or in detention; and
- (e) Livelihood training and loans for OFWs who have decided to return to the Philippines for good.

The Secretary shall issue guidelines, rules and regulations on proper management, utilization and disbursement of the Fund. The Department shall submit a quarterly fund utilization report to the Office of the President, copies of which shall be made available to Congress.

CHAPTER VI

APPROPRIATIONS

Sec. 19. Appropriations. – The amount of One Billion Pesos (P 1,000,000,000) for the initial operation of the Department shall be sourced from the Contingent Fund of the President as well as

from the existing funds of the attached offices, bureaus, and agencies. Subsequent funding requirements shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. The Department shall include in its proposed budget the necessary amount to enable it to achieve its mandate.

CHAPTER VII

MISCELLANEOUS

Sec. 20. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The DFA, DOLE, DBM, POEA, OWWA, CFO, NCRO and the Civil Service Commission shall, within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this Act, promulgate such rules and regulations necessary to implement this Act.

Sec 21. Implementing Authority of the Secretary. – The Secretary shall issue such rules, regulations, and other issuances as may be necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act.

Sec 22. Separability Clause. – Any portion or provision of this Act that is declared unconstitutional shall not have an effect of nullifying other portions of provisions hereof as long as such remaining portions can still subsist and be given effect in their entirety.

Sec 23. Repealing Clause. – All laws, ordinances, rules, regulations, other issuances or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with this Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly. This Act does not repeal any benefits already provided and accorded to Overseas Filipinos and Migrant Workers in other laws, ordinances, rules, regulations and other issuances.

Sec. 24. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette of in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,