

**PRESS RELEASE**

**CONGRESSMAN WALDEN BELLO KEYNOTES AN INAUGURAL CONFERENCE, MEETS WITH LEBANESE PARLIAMENTARIAN AND NGOs IN BEIRUT**



**L-R:** – Ambassador Leah M. Basinang-Ruiz and Congressman Walden Bello



**L-R:** Cong. Bello , Ambassador Ruiz and H.E. Ghassan Moukheiber, MP



**L-R** – Mr. Ricardo Alejandro Ruiz, Ambassador Ruiz, Congressman Bello, Engr. Kamal Sioufi, President of the Governing Board of Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center, Ms. Najla Chahda, Director, Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center and Vice Consul Dennis John Briones



**L-R:** Ms. Lala Arabian, Executive Manager and Protection Coordinator of Insan Association; Mr. Charles Nasrallah, Representative and Spokesperson of Amnesty International and concurrent Director and Founder of Insan Association, Ms. Sara Chreif, Community Mobilizer of KAFA, Ambassador Ruiz and Congressman Bello.

19 June 2013 – Congressman Walden Bello visited Lebanon on 22-25 May 2013 in order to deliver a keynote address at the ASFARI Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship Inaugural Conference on “Civic Participation and Citizenship: New Spaces of Civil Society Activism in the Arab World”, held at the American University of Beirut on 23-24 May 2013.

The two-day conference consisted of panel discussions by leading activists, lawyers, judges, journalists, academics, film-makers and labor representatives from more than nine Arab countries, who discussed and analyzed how changes in the Arab world over the last two years reconfigured the boundaries of society and the meaning of citizenship.

Congressman Bello was met and assisted during his visit by the Philippine Embassy in Beirut led by Ambassador Leah M. Basinang-Ruiz. He was able to meet with H.E. Ghassan Moukheiber, Member of

the Lebanese Parliament and Rapporteur for the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, as well as with the officers of four non-governmental organizations based in Lebanon, which cater to the needs of migrants namely: the Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center, Insan Association, KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation and Amnesty International – Lebanon.

The meeting with MP Moukheiber was aimed at fostering inter-parliamentary friendship and links between the Philippines and Lebanon. It also discussed mutual efforts to pursue the realization of the 2012 PHL-LEBANON MOU on labor cooperation and its accompanying protocol on household service workers.

The meeting with the NGOs gave Congressman Bello the opportunity not only to know their programs and services to migrants in Lebanon but also to convey to them his appreciation for the concrete assistance that they have been extending to Filipino nationals in Lebanon as well as for their active cooperation with the Philippine Embassy. The NGOs informed Congressman Bello about specific cases involving Filipino nationals that they were handling and also highlighted the fact that the Philippine Embassy in Lebanon is the most organized among their collaborators in the area of migrant protection. Congressman Bello assured them that one of the critical priorities of the Philippine Government is the promotion and protection of the country's migrant workers overseas. **END**