

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Lapus: Spanish-speaking students to be culturally ready, globally competitive

At the sidelines of the 181st United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Executive Board meeting where Secretary of Education Jesli Lapus sits as board member, he reported that in a recent high-level visit to Madrid, Spain, the training of public school teachers in the Spanish language is now a fully realizable project with the firm backing of the Spanish government.

Secretary Lapus met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Education of Spain, the Rector of the University of Alcala, a leading school in Spanish language pedagogy, and the renowned Instituto Cervantes to wrap up the significant details of a long-term framework to re-introduce Spanish as an elective subject in Philippine public schools.

“Our social and historical ties with Spain and the Ibero-American countries worldwide means that we can be conversant in Spanish, an international language,” said Lapus. “This well-planned initiative will expand the knowledge of our students, broaden their horizons and give them access to resources previously unavailable due to communication barriers,” he added.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo issued an order in November 2007 calling for the reintegration of Spanish into the curriculum.

The Spanish government is funding the on-going pilot teacher training program which involves two months of face-to-face classes and a ten-month on-line component. It is also offering scholarship grants for teachers and students who wish to study Spanish or take up a master’s degree in four top universities in Spain. In last March’s visit to the Department of Education (DepEd), Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos emphasized the importance and sustainability of the project.

Aside from Spanish, DepEd envisions regional high schools for languages to offer Mandarin, French and Japanese to increase the multi-lingual options of students. The worldwide trend is for students to be bi-lingual in major languages.

“Spain is showing a special interest in the country’s heritage and the Philippines is strategically positioned to showcase the cultural diversity and language skills of its people,” said Lapus.

“Spain’s long term commitment includes the designation of permanent education attaché in the Spanish embassy in Manila. Language centers in Spanish in teacher education institutions such as the Philippine Normal University and the DepEd training centers are contemplated,” Lapus added. **END**

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Attached photo:

Photo shows DepEd Secretary Jesli Lapus exchanging tokens with Instituto Cervantes Directress Carmen Caffarel of Madrid, Spain.

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