ABOUT THE 2ND AIKS KOREAN STUDIES CONFERENCE

The Ateneo Initiative for Korean Studies (AIKS) hosted its 2nd Korean Studies conference last October 23, 2015 at Escaler Hall, Ateneo de Manila University. This year's theme 'Investigating Transnational Spaces in Philippines-Korea Relation' reflects the necessity to further strengthen the bilateral relations between these two countries in light of changes happening in the region, such as the strengthening of ASEAN economic ties through APEC. As Ateneo de Manila University President, Fr. Jose Ramon Villarin, SJ stated in his Welcome Remarks, in the global age, intellectual exchanges between the two nations should staunchly "build bridges that destroy our isolation."

In attendance were dignitaries from the Korean Embassy in the Philippines, the Korean Cultural Center and other partner Korean organizations, including H.E. Ambassador Kim Jae-Shin who gave his greetings to the audience. The keynote speech was delivered by the Hon. Luis Cruz, who serves as Assistant Secretary of the Office of ASEAN Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs. Hon. Cruz gained his extensive knowledge of Philippine-Korea relations first hand as he served as Philippines Ambassador to South Korea. In his speech Hon. Cruz reminded the audience that "[t]he ongoing flow of Koreans to the Philippines presents a new opportunity for the continuous maturing of PH-Korea relations, from formal diplomatic and state-to-state ties and economic cooperation activities, to the level of more interpersonal relationships between Koreans and Filipinos."

Since the 1950s, when the Philippines sent five Batallion Combat Teams (BCTs) of the Philippine Army to South Korea in order to help maintain its democracy and independence during the height of the Cold War that split Korea in two, Philippine-Korea relations have retained commendable interaction. The following are some results of this interaction: a significant number of Filipinos are employed by Korean companies, while the Philippines is one of the top-tourist destinations for Koreans; also, student exchange between the two nations is in the increase; Filipinos, moreover, have become enamoured with the different facets of Korea's cultural wave or *Hallyu* and are top consumers of it; on the other hand, Korea has consistently been generous in lending support especially in recent natural devastations in the Philippines such as those caused by typhoons Yolanda and Lando. Today, with the pull and push of globalization in different aspects of nation-building, the Republic of the Philippines and the Republic of Korea are challenged to further boost its prospects for meaningful exchange.

The conference had three panels with two speakers and a discussant for each. Panel 1 was on *Multiculturalism in Contemporary Korean Society*; Panel 2 was on *Labor and Migration*; and Panel 3 was on *Economic Exchange and Development Cooperation*. The conference was organized in partnership with Ateneo Center for Asian Studies (ACAS), through the support of the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS).