

Obama asks Aquino to join gov't forum in N.Y.

Written by Administrator

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President Barack Obama greets President Benigno Aquino III at the United Nations last September.

MANILA — President Benigno Aquino III will be traveling to the United States towards the end of the month to take part in a global initiative on open governance and attend the annual World Bank (WB)-International Monetary Fund (IMF) meetings.

Mr. Aquino said that he was invited by U.S. President Barack Obama to take part in the formal launch of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in New York City on Sept. 20, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

“We are going on President Obama’s invitation [for this] partnership for open governance...It’s an official visit...,” Mr. Aquino told reporters in an ambush interview after oath-taking ceremonies in Malacañang.

The OGP, the formation of which was announced on July 12 by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota, is defined at its website, <http://>

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[/www.opengovpartnership.org](http://www.opengovpartnership.org)

, as “a multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance.”

The initiative is overseen by an international steering committee of eight governments, including the Philippines, and nine civil society organizations.

Other governments are from Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the U.S.

As co-proponents of the initiative, the U.S. is hosting the first annual meeting this month and Brazil in March 2012.

Countries participating in the program, according to the minimum eligibility criteria, must commit to adopting transparency, citizen participation, fiscal transparency and access to information on government activities and decisions; citizen participation in public debate; accountability; and providing citizens with open access to technology.

During the formal launch, the eight governments in the steering committee are expected to embrace the Open Government Declaration and announce their country action plans.

While in the U.S., Mr. Aquino said he will also be attending the WB-IMF annual meetings in Washington on Sept. 23-25.

“I think I’ll be talking also before the World Bank there. I understand that the drives that we have already been achieving in the Philippines are already being highlighted by the World Bank,” said Mr. Aquino.

Sought for additional comment, Presidential Communications Development and Strategic

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Planning Secretary Ramon "Ricky" A. Carandang said details of the President's attendance in the World Bank event have yet to be formalized, although his talk will touch on transparency in governance.

"The World Bank is interested in our initiatives, and the President will talk about transparency in governance," said Carandang.

Asked about the President's presence in a meeting usually attended by Central Bank governors and finance ministers, Carandang replied: "They're there, but they also invite heads of state..."

Following his U.S. trip, the President will be traveling next to Japan on another official visit within the month, details of which have yet to be announced.

"I think there will be good news if not for both trips, at least definitely for one, that I will be bringing back home," Mr. Aquino told reporters.

The trip to Japan will be the third for the country.

Other visits were the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in November and his meeting with Moro rebel leader Al Haj Murad Ebrahim.

The President returned Saturday from a visit to China wherein he announced billions of dollar in possible investments and two-way trade.