NEW YORK, 12 March 2015 – In collaboration with the Filipino-American Press Club of New York (FAPCNY), the Philippine Consulate General launched the first ConGen Press Hour last 11 March at the Kalayaan Hall Annex of the Philippine Center New York.

Consul General Mario L. De Leon, Jr. acknowledged the partnership of the Fil-Am press on the Public Diplomacy efforts and Community Relations of the Consulate and commended the FAPCNY for their continued support of the Consulate’s initiatives. 18 media practitioners including The Filipino Channel, GMA TV, Queens Public TV, along with Fil-Am publications were in attendance for the launch. All the Consulate officers – Deputy Consul General Kira Acuzena, Consuls Bong Carino and Kerwin Tate as well as Vice Consul Khrys Corpuz - were all present during the event.

The ConGen then proceeded with a presentation on the consular services offered to the community by the Consulate. He tackled issues with Passport delivery, the transition of
service providers and turnaround times in the Consulate. He also cited Authentications and Notarial or documents, Dual Citizenship application, and Civil Registry, and briefly touched on Visa services, as well as Special Assistance to PWD, seniors and pregnant women.

At the end of the presentation, ConGen De Leon invited questions from the press.

Clockwise from Top Left: ConGen De Leon explains consular services in his presentation; Consul Kerwin Tate answers a question on Overseas Voting; Members of the press listen to replies to their inquiry; Vice Consul Khrys Corpuz chimes in on passport services. (Photos by Rolan Gutierrez and Caloy Cruz)

Many of the first round of queries centered on the presentation, inquiring on delivery times for passport, the delays experienced by the public. The reporters were also curious about assistance extended to distressed nationals such as prison visitation and legal representation. There were questions on the real benefits of Dual Citizenship, which led to the discussion on Overseas Voting.

As the dialog progressed, the journalists started probing on the current political issues in the Philippines.
A candid exchange of opinions and revelation of facts ensued, when the journalists inquired on the status of the Mamasapano incident, the Peace Process, the Arbitration case between the Philippines and China on the West Philippine Sea, and Amal Clooney’s case filed in behalf of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

At the end of the event, FAPCNY President Monette Rivera addressed the attendees, thanking the support of the Consulate to finally realize their long-planned project to hold a regular audience with the Consul General. She announced the next ConGen Press Hour in June will be with PIDCI to promote the Independence Day celebrations in New York. END