

GMA praying for peace, stability

President Arroyo is praying for peace, prosperity and stability this year and called on Filipinos to help shield the country from the global economic crisis.

In her New Year's message yesterday, Mrs. Arroyo said first and foremost she wanted peace, progress and prosperity for the nation in 2009.

"The year 2008 was tumultuous for the world due to the

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global economic recession that, thankfully, has not become a crisis in the Philippines," she said.

"So I pray for greater peace and stability. I hope that we can all work together as a global community to weather these storms.

"Here at home, I hope that the efforts we are making to eliminate poverty and to improve the lives of our people will continue to bear fruit and that these efforts will pave the way for the creation of a more prosperous Philippines."

Speaking to reporters in Baguio City, Mrs. Arroyo said her administration was able to take steps to protect the economy early on from the global crisis.

The government's duty is to protect the people from food and oil price shocks, and tempering

inflation, she added.

Mrs. Arroyo said the Philippines was not seen by international agencies as having a food problem during the rice crisis last year.

"We can never predict anything with certainty," she said.

"Two-thirds of the world is in recession, but not in the Philippines. The important thing is we have to make sure we remain competitive."

Mrs. Arroyo did not deliver her traditional Christmas message on television and on radio.

She also did not speak during the Rizal Day celebrations when she was expected to enumerate her administration's accomplishments for the year.

It was apparently the first time this happened under the Arroyo administration. — Paolo Romero