

GMA looks forward to working with Obama

President Arroyo is looking forward to working with US President Barack Obama to further strengthen relations between the Philippines and the US.

In her speech yesterday at the annual *vin d'honneur* or the traditional New Year reception for the diplomatic corps, Mrs. Arroyo said her address with the ambassadors would not be complete without greeting Obama on the eve of his inauguration as the 44th US president.

"America plays a special role in the life and history of the Philippines," she said.

"In my conversations with Senator Barack Obama before the elections, and President-elect Obama after his election, it was made clear that the special relationship between the US and the Philippines will continue unabated," Mrs. Arroyo said.

"We look forward to working with the new President and we welcome him to the world stage," she said.

She said the two countries' "ties run deep" and that over two and a half million Americans are of Filipino descent.

"We fought side by side with America in World War II and in virtually every other conflict since," the President said.

For Speaker Prospero Nograles, Obama's swearing in may set the stage for the global economic recovery.

"The inauguration of Obama as the 44th president of the US should usher in a sustained period of economic recovery not only in the US but in other countries which were caught in the financial conflagration that crippled even First World economies around the world," Nograles said.

"The challenges that await the Obama presidency are tough and complex but I am confident that his youthful leadership can reverse the course of the tumbling US economy and prevent it from cascading further to Philippine shores," he added.

For her part, US Ambassador Kristie Kenney thanked Filipinos for their support to the US. She said she was happy that Mrs. Arroyo dedicated a part of her speech to congratulate Obama.

"It's a historic day for America and we're all thrilled that we celebrate that with Philippine friends, so thanks to all of you for celebrating an extraordinary day for America and a great day for Philippine-American friendship," Kenney told reporters after the *vin d'honneur*.

In a statement, the US embassy said the inauguration of Obama also celebrates the continuity and strength of the centuries-old democracy.