

# GMA to discuss economic, security issues with Obama

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY — President Arroyo is looking forward to discussing a host of issues — particularly economic and security — with US President Barack Obama on July 30.

"Even when he (Obama) was still a candidate, there was already correspondence with him," Mrs. Arroyo said. She is the first Southeast Asian leader invited by Obama to the White House.

"These are issues that affect Mindanao. Issues like peace, security and terrorism," she told reporters at the Waterfront Insular Hotel upon her arrival here yesterday from Egypt where she attended the 15th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit.

The President said she would also be tackling with Obama the US assistance for peace and development of Mindanao.

She also said she would ask concerned US officials to help the Philippines gain more access to US markets for its products like banana, seaweed, and milkfish from Mindanao.

"There would also be discussions about the construction of a US military base in Guam which is expected to employ Filipino workers," the President said.

She also said that she would be meeting with US business leaders.

"I would tell them that the Philippines is a good business destination to invest in because of the resiliency of its economy," Mrs. Arroyo said. She said climate change would also be on the agenda.

In a visit to the Philippines last week, Central Intelligence Agency director Leon Panetta said Obama's meeting with Mrs. Arroyo would likely focus on achieving regional peace and prosperity.

Panetta said the meeting would be an opportunity for the two countries to discuss partnerships in counter-terrorism, nuclear non-proliferation in the region and other regional security issues such as developments in Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan and the Middle East.

The situation in the Middle East is of particular importance to the Philippines because 2.4 million of its citizens live and work in the region.