

# *GMA assures US: Elections to take place in 2010*

By MARVIN SY

President Arroyo assured the US government and the entire international community that elections would take place as scheduled next year as part of the Philippines' com-

mitment to democratic values.

In a statement prepared for today's celebration of Philippine-American friendship day, the President

Turn to Page 8

# GMA assures From Page 1

responded to the statement made by United States ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenney that elections should take place as scheduled.

The ambassador said that elections are a good way of renewing democracy.

"The ties that bind our nations are strong. They are based on family, a shared history and a common commitment to democratic values," the President said.

"One of the values that we share with our American

friends is a fierce commitment to electoral democracy and the institution of suffrage," Mrs. Arroyo added.

The President's political plans after she steps down next year have been the subject of wide speculation because of her refusal to disclose her intentions.

The efforts of her allies in the House of Representatives to amend the Constitution have not helped her, as it only fueled speculations that elections might not take place next year.

In her statement, the President made it very clear that her administration supports the holding of elections next May.

The President said the Filipinos believe that "political leadership is not something that is won by wealth, bequeathed by inheritance or conferred by regal or religious authority."

"In an electoral democracy, political leadership must be won in a free and open contest that enables the people at large to select the few among them deemed worthy to lead the rest," the President said.

"The contest can neither be

frustrated nor circumscribed and protection of the ballot is among the most sacred duties of those who govern us," she added.

Presidential adviser on political affairs Gabriel Claudio said the Arroyo government appreciates the support given by the United States for the Philippines' democratic institutions and traditions and would uphold these at all cost.

"The US, other foreign allies, and especially the Filipino people can be assured that elections will be held as scheduled in May next year," Claudio said.

"A no-el scenario is not only extremely remote but also unacceptable as a situation that will demean our democratic traditions, deprive the electorate of their basic right and shame our country before the international community," he added.

Knowing full well that the entire country is looking forward to the holding of elections next year, Claudio said the government "will do everything within its power to ensure not only that the elections push through, but that they are held in an efficient, honest and cred-

ible manner."

Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said the President remains confident in the ability of the Comelec to come up with a satisfactory resolution of the issues surrounding the electoral process.

"The Palace will continue to support and respect the actions and decisions of the Comelec. With or without full automation, the elections will push through and no matter what form it may take, the elections must always be safeguarded by our people as their birthright in a democracy," Remonde said.