

Magna Carta was gift for RP women

By Michael Lim Ubac

Philippine Daily Inquirer

First Posted 03:27:00 03/08/2009

Filed Under: [Legislation](#), [Government](#), [Congress](#)

MANILA, Philippines—Sen. Jamby Madrigal said the Magna Carta of Women was meant to be Congress' gift to Filipino women today—International Women's Day.

Madrigal, one of the principal authors of the measure, said the bicameral conference committee worked overtime on Tuesday to reconcile the disagreeing provisions of the Senate and House versions of the bill, hopefully to be able to send it to the President for her signature today.

In her sponsorship speech of the bicameral report, Madrigal said the Magna Carta, if signed into law, would become the de facto "bill of rights" for Filipino women, and the first law to define all forms of discrimination against women.

Madrigal said the Magna Carta of Women was 70 years in the making, and would mark a historical milestone in the Filipino's long struggle for equality that began with the suffrage movement in the 1920s that secured women's right to vote in 1937.

This bill, said Madrigal, would make it necessary to amend or repeal all remaining laws discriminatory to women within a specified period.

Continuing bias

Sen. Loren Legarda, co-author of the Magna Carta, said the pronouncement by the International Labor Organization that some 22 million Asian women risked losing their jobs because of the economic downturn "affirms the continuing workplace gender bias against women."

Many female workers still find themselves in casual, temporary, sub-contracted or informal employment, said Legarda.

"More diverse career and employment opportunities must be made available to Filipino women and society's lingering bias towards them must stop," she said.

Sen. Pia Cayetano, in a speech Saturday at a press conference at United Nations headquarters in New York, said women still battled lingering prejudice against their participation in politics.

Cayetano, president of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, said too few political parties promoted women as candidates for election.

Law on violence

The Commission on Human Rights led by Leila de Lima also called on President Macapagal-Arroyo to immediately sign the Magna Carta to strengthen the application of the law on violence against women and children.

De Lima said other issues threatening the rights of women in the Philippines included domestic violence, sexual assault, extrajudicial killings, unequal job opportunities, internal displacement due to conflicts, health care (including reproductive health) education and proper treatment in the criminal justice system. *With a report from Alcuin Papa*