



On the funding requirement for consultancy fees, Congressman Cuenco suggested that the Committee Secretaries of the Senate and House panels compare notes to come up with a uniform rate.

Ms. Aristoza, Committee Secretary, read before the Committee the resource persons to be invited in the first regular meeting, to wit: Secretary Alberto Romulo of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Secretary Avelino Cruz of the Department of National Defense (DND), Lt. Gen. Efren Abu, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and the Executive Director of the VFA Commission. The first regular meeting will be held in an Executive Session and the agenda are the following:

1. Schedule of Balikatan Exercises for the year 2005 and other joint exercises;
2. Budget of Balikatan Exercises for the year 2005;
3. Evaluation of all past Balikatan Exercises, its impact on the quality of training and equipment;
4. Inquiry, actions taken and status of cases related to the VFA; and
5. Rules of Engagement and the Terms of Reference.

Senator Biazon informed the Chair that there is a conflict of schedule for the first regular meeting on the second Thursday of January as he is part of the Senate delegation to the Asia Pacific Parliamentarians Forum to be held in Vietnam. He then moved that the first regular meeting for the month of January will instead be on the third Thursday which is January 20, 2005. The Committee agreed.

Congressman Cuenco also proposed that an item on the budget for foreign travels be included as an amendment to the Rules. Senator Biazon modified the proposed amendment for the travel to be related to the VFA.

Congressman Golez proposed that the agenda be divided to be taken up in two meetings as the first three thereof would take much time to discuss, so that agenda no. 4 and 5 be taken up in a separate meeting. Senator Santiago stated that dates and agenda will be indicated properly in the notice.

Congressman Abaya requested that materials be provided at least a week before the scheduled meeting.

On the motion of Senator Enrile, the meeting was adjourned.

*Prepared and submitted by Ma. Antoniette Pelaez-Aristoza, MNSA, Director II and Committee Secretary, Legislative Oversight Committee on the Visiting Forces Agreement (LOVFA).*