

DOT targets \$62-B wellness market

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The Department of Tourism (DOT) is preparing the local health and wellness industry for its participation in the 2009 World Health Tourism Congress (WHTC), which is seen to position the country in the multibillion dollar global market.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano said the country's hosting of the WHTC "forms part of a product diversification strategy aimed at expanding our captive global market" even in the face of the world financial crisis.

"In the case of the Philippines, we offer not just quality and affordability, but also a unique travel experience marked by the country's beyond-the-usual tourism destinations and the passionately caring character of the Filipinos. This is our key message to the global health and wellness market when its major players converge at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila on March 26 for the WHTC 2009," Durano said.

The global wellness market is projected to surge from the current \$40 billion to \$62 billion by 2012, with Thailand, Singapore, India, Malaysia, South Korea and the Philippines expected to emerge as Asia's top industry players.

Stressing the advantage of the Philippines in this field, Durano cited the country's milder climate than South Korea's, greater number of English-speaking people than Thailand's, more healthcare professionals than Singapore and Malaysia, and proximity to markets as the United States, Canada, Japan and Russia.

"At the same time, the Philippines is not too far from the Middle East, where governments even pay for citizens' medical travel," Durano said.