



INTERNATIONAL FORUM

OSLO, NORWAY

**May
NEWSLETTER
05/2021**

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Number 465



INTERNATIONAL FORUM

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Special Events

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Activities

Anita Solheim

Forum Diary

Date	Event	Time	Page
May 25	Kistefos Art Centre	12:00	7
August 18	Ambassadors' Roundtable Arendalsuka	09:00	8

THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES

For the June *Newsletter* is Wednesday, **May 26**. Please send your contribution to Elizabeth S. Rasmussen and to int.forum@online.no.

Please visit our website www.iforum.no for updates and the latest information.

From the President



Dear Members,

Hope is not a strategy. Nor is complaining. An old saying goes: “The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The realist adjusts the sail.” That is what we have been doing in the Forum. The pandemic prohibited interactions among ourselves and the CD community. So, we adjusted our sails.

Our *Newsletter* adjusted to reach out to members and diplomats. In a new section, Ambassadors and spouses shared photographs and experiences. We published wonderful contributions from Britain, Brazil, Latvia, Austria, Poland, Portugal and the Philippines. We also carried remarkable contributions from our members. We have a talented group of women in the Forum and we hope to publish more from you. Official meetings, monthly lectures and discussions moved online and all information was regularly updated on our website.

What is done in the short run determines the long run. Good financial health is important for every organisation. This year, the Forum achieved a financial surplus. This is not because events could not be held. The reasons for the surplus are given in the Annual Report.

Digitalisation was introduced before the pandemic, so we all could adjust to the demands of running an organisation at a time of social distancing and lockdowns. Even as most of our existing popular programs continue, we also did the groundwork to organise, for the first time, an Ambassadors Roundtable at Arendalsuka in August 2021 (details inside).

As the pandemic storm blew, we adjusted our sails. Hope is certainly not a strategy, but going forward, we do hope for some good wind in our sails.

Best regards,

Anita Pratap

President

In Remembrance
of our First President and Founder



Grethe Frydenlund
20 May 1931 – 17 May 2019
with Affection and Gratitude

COMING EVENTS



THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday, June 07

The Annual General Meeting cannot be held at Vinderen Seniorsenter because of current restrictions. However, with the help of our members, the Board proposes to conduct the meeting using email, like we did last year.

The Agenda, list of proposals from the Nomination Committee, the proposals and appointments made by the Board are included in this May *Newsletter* (pages 5 – 6). The Annual Report 2020 – 2021, the Treasurer's Report and the Auditor's Report will be sent concurrently in a separate email.

Please read through these documents. It is important that we hear from you whether or not you approve of the points on the Agenda. Just send an email marked AGM to int.forum@online.no with one of the following texts, as soon as possible and before **May 25**.

- I. I approve the proposals made in all 9 items on the Agenda
- II. I approve the proposals made in all 9 items on the Agenda, apart from item x, which I think

NB: The Annual General Meeting is for full members only

AGENDA

1. The Board proposes to hold the AGM using email
2. The Board proposes that Elspeth K. Walseth shall write the minutes
3. The Board proposes Rosemary Hauge and Mette Svadberg as signatories to the minutes
4. The Board proposes Dorota Steensland and Patricia Blackwell as tellers
5. The Board's Annual Report - see separate email
6. The Treasurer's Annual Report and the Auditor's Report - see separate email
7. The Board proposes that the Membership Fee remains unchanged
8. Elections – see list of Nominations and Appointments below
9. The Board proposes that thanks and presentations be postponed until the present situation is normalised.

The Board

ART COMMITTEE
The Kistefos Museum
Tuesday, May 25



DATE/TIME: Tuesday **May 25** at 12:00
SIGN UP: *For more information, please contact the IF Office.*
PRICE: Entrance NOK150,- for groups/pensioners, and NOK130,-
for the guide.
For more information, see the April *Newsletter*

ARENDALSUKA

Ambassadors' Roundtable

Arendalsuka

August 18, 2021

'Arendalsuka', Norway's much acclaimed annual political festival, usually draws about 75,000 people to beautiful Arendal on the southern coast of Norway.

For the first time, International Forum will organise an Ambassadors' Roundtable at Arendalsuka on **August 18** from **09:00 to 11:00**. In cooperation with the Mayor of Arendal, Robert Cornels Nordli, this event will take place at Gamle Rådhus, the charming, historic building on Arendal's waterfront.



The Old Town Hall

THE AMBASSADORS' ROUNDTABLE

'Are we Heading Towards a World Defined by Strategic Capitalism?'

Keynote Speakers:

H. E. Richard Wood, Ambassador of the UK

H. E. Yi Xianling, Ambassador of China

The Ambassadors' Roundtable will be a conversational, interactive event with a panel discussion, including H.E. Le Hong Lam, Ambassador of Vietnam, and a QA session with the audience. It will be followed by a prominent Norwegian commentator discussing the key political trends in the upcoming September national elections.

The Ambassadors' Roundtable will be held the day after Arendalsuka's flagship event, **Global Outlook**, to be held on August 17 at 13:00.

The theme this year is ‘Recovery’. Keynote speakers include Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide and the CEO of the Government Pension Fund Global (the ‘Oil Fund’), Nicolai Tangen.

Both **Global Outlook** and the **Ambassadors’ Roundtable** will be moderated by the undersigned.

Organised every year during calendar week 33, Arendalsuka is Norway’s most important meeting place for policy debates, attended by the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, party leaders, CEOs, bureaucrats, professionals, academics, foundations, federations, NGOs and the general public.



In keeping with Arendalsuka’s purpose of encouraging informed public opinion, all events are free, but some require registration.

Also see: <https://arendalsuka.no/>

Anita Pratap

REPORTS

Board Event

Svein Harald Øygard

April 13, 2021

Post-Pandemic, what will the new Normal look like? Will our economies and models for international cooperation be healed?

Mr Øygard started his lecture by admitting that most of his working life had been spent dealing with crises! The most important of his assignments was Iceland, after the 2008 global financial crisis hit with full force.

It was the worst crisis since the Great Depression. Mr Øygard was appointed Central Bank Governor of Iceland and was tasked with saving the country from total financial collapse.

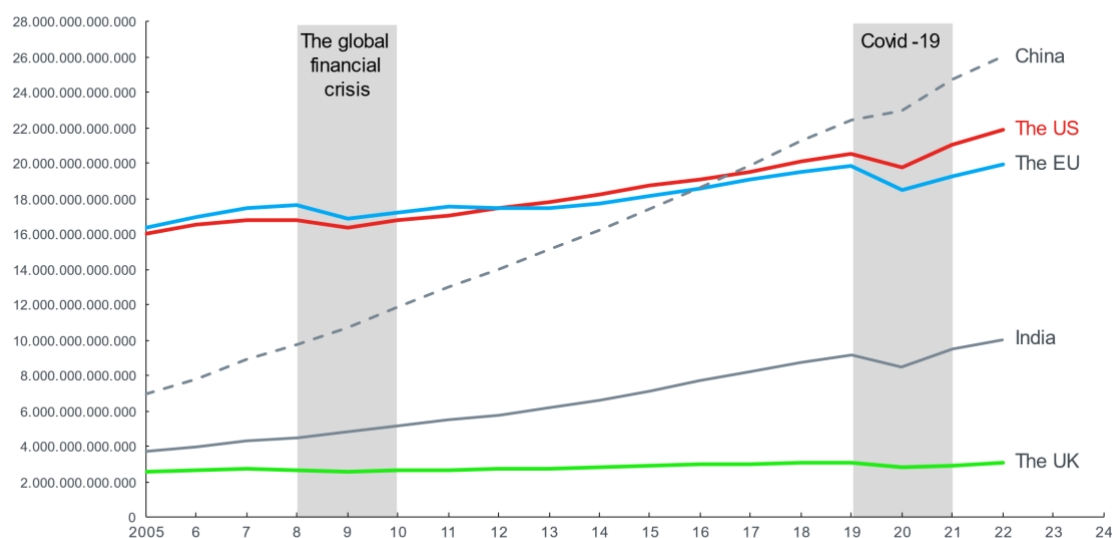
Even though Iceland was one of the countries that were hit the hardest, it recovered quickly. Greece was the worst-hit European country and has still not fully recovered. The EU managed to recuperate many sectors, but with great variation between the regions. Norway seems to have had a fairly slow recovery and has not developed as expected after the financial crisis.

Mr Øygard quickly explained how Iceland became a ‘gladiator’ arena for the world of finance. Mr Øygard shared what happened in his book, *In the Combat Zone of Finance*. The 2008 crisis originated in the US, but the US was still first to again get moving. The US was among the countries hardest hit by the Corona pandemic, but it is apparently back on a growth trajectory.

How you are hit matters – How you recover matters more

The starting point

GDP by country; USD; Constant 2017 PPP



Source: The World Bank (2005-2019); Growth thereafter based on OECD Economic Outlook

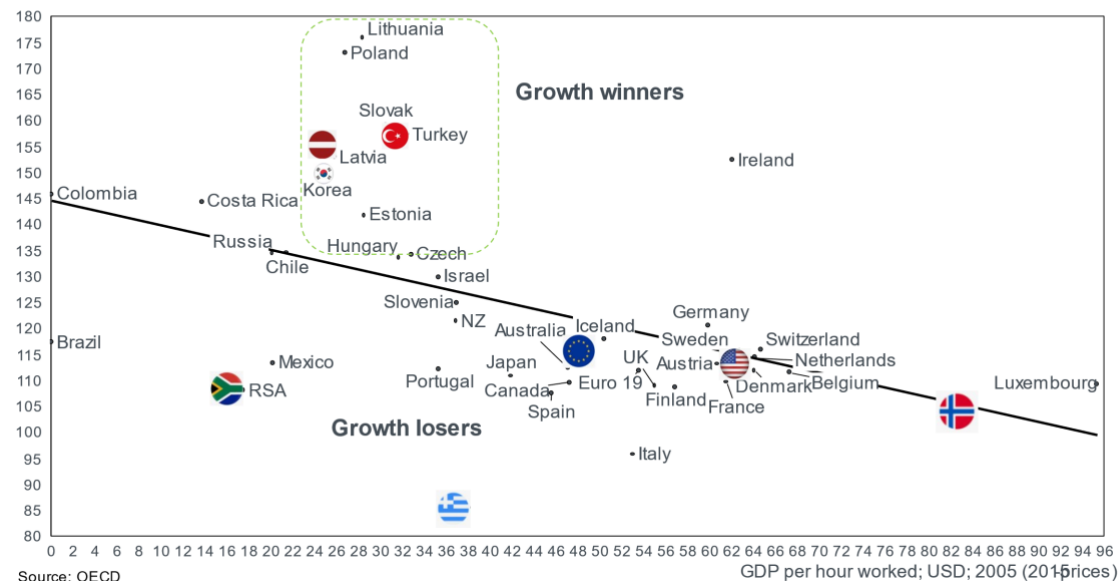
Over the last years, India and especially China have made greater headway than many Western countries if measured by GDP. The power battle on the diplomatic scene has its parallel in the world of finance. The years ahead will tell us if the Corona crisis will be seen as a watershed moment.

Some of the most affected countries have ended up as the lead performers, e.g. Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Korea and Estonia. This sends an important message and reminds us that we now need to rebuild the economies after Corona.

How you are hit matters – How you recover matters more

The starting point

GDP development from 2005 onwards; Index; Country level GDP in 2005 = 100



In Norway, up to 40% of exports are driven by the oil and gas sector. Despite the good intentions, dependency has increased well beyond what can be considered a ‘balanced trajectory’.

Regardless of the political colour of the Norwegian government, this issue will be a major theme in Norwegian economic policy and foreign relations in the years to come. The ‘oil fund’ naturally provides a buffer. However, its integrity and value preservation will become ever more important, also as part of Norwegian foreign policy.

On a general level, and despite the difficulties, many economies have actually fared relatively well during the Corona crisis. The total economic activity has declined year over year by about 10%. Hence, 10% of one year’s ‘value creation’ (production) has been lost because of the collapse in many service sectors.

Still, we have not seen a broader systemic collapse among banks and investment funds, and surprisingly few bankruptcies have been filed. So far, no country has defaulted. This is the main difference from 2008-2009. This situation is due to an aggressive policy response: Governments have opened their coffers and Central Banks have slashed interest rates and injected cash into the economy (by buying corporate and government bonds with ‘fresh money’).

A main concern is whether the policy makers have got the balance right - the \$1,9 trillion US fiscal stimulus is the number one example.

Yes, the economies need breathing space and stimulus. But, has the accelerator been pushed too hard? There is one huge paradox: while governments have spent more, its citizens have increased their savings. In Norway, there is a 1:1 match. Every NOK spent by the government has been offset by increased savings in the private sector.

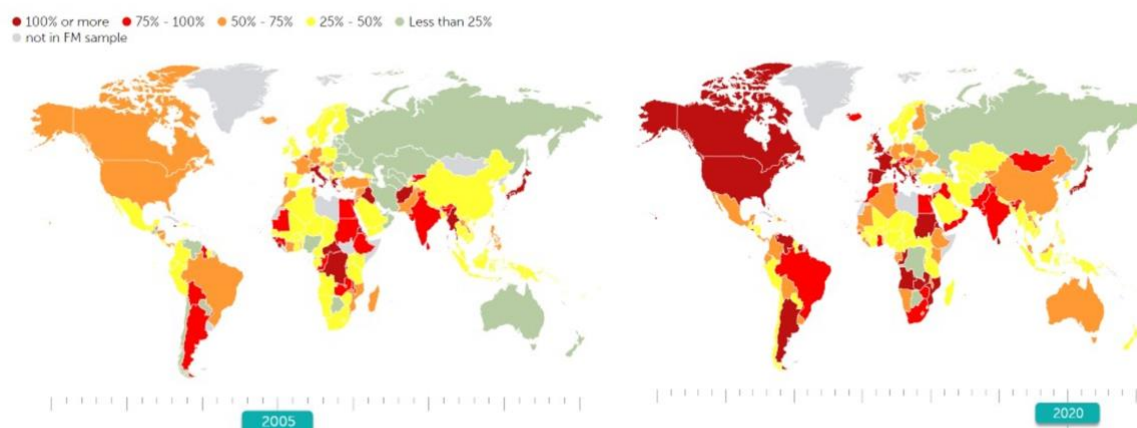
As a consequence, for better or worse, a giant buying spree may soon be unleashed, as the supply constraints come under stress, which may pose a congestion risk. Inflation and debt may surge.

Interest rates are now almost at or below zero percent in most countries, and household debts are therefore up, especially in the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Norway. In many countries, the public debt has also sky-rocketed.

Throughout the pandemic, policy makers have adopted a 'Whatever-it-takes' type of policy. The years ahead will show us what the costs will be. There is a saying; 'The mechanism to solve the prior crisis initiates the next.'

The economic world map has changed color

New Normal



Source: IMF

Yet, Mr Øygard remains optimistic, thinking that governments have learned from previous crises and are better equipped to deal with what lies ahead, and have a better understanding of the financial mechanisms.

This takes us back to the lessons from 2008. The countries that fared best were the ones that addressed the challenges immediately, split the bill fairly, and mobilized the labour force of their countries.

After the speech, there were many **questions** for the lecturer:

What is the main road ahead? Mr Øygard is worried about the Norwegian economy and public finances. Employment is key to the well-being of any country; but in Norway, too many have dropped out of the work force, mainly

because the government has had too much money. As a country, we are doing quite well, but not as well as we should have.

What about renewable energy? Private companies and the markets are driving the new sustainable sector. Policy makers are largely left behind in terms of technology, investments and new financing models. The transition to renewable is primarily a private enterprise. The Norwegian government support and finance private initiatives. Many countries are far ahead of Norway.

What about Covid-19? How can we successfully manage the end of the pandemic? Will the new US President have an impact on EU's economy? A lack of investments is the main reason for sluggish economic performances in the EU and in the US. Households want to save, but the available capacity has not been used for fixed capital investments. Uncertainty, political turmoil, and ambiguous regulations hamper investments. Biden and his administration could make a difference.

What about household debts? In Korea, the government worry about household debts and rising interest rates in the near future. Mr. Øygard suggested that those who are interested should look at the regulations imposed by the Norwegian Financial Supervisory Agency. The FSA has imposed limits on how much homeowners or prospective owners can borrow on a specific income and as a share of the value of the property.

Will the world see more protectionism or nationalism in the wake of the pandemic? Mr Øygard does not believe so. One thing is that the supply chain needs to remain open, another is that nationalism means instability, and therefore less investments. However, a revision of the regulations in the transport sector may be advisable (just look at what happened in the Suez Canal...). And, yes, maybe we have become a bit too inclined to send everything back and forth between continents.

What about the 3% spending cap on the 'oil fund'? Is the government spending the future pension of the younger generations? Mr Øygard thinks that the 'oil fund' paradoxically to some extent has been too successful! The 3% of the fund now represents huge sums of money! The government will probably lower the cap to between 2% and 2.5% for two reasons: to avoid becoming overly dependent on fund transfers and to counteract lower capital returns in the years to come.

Before closing the session, IF President Anita Pratap thanked the speaker for his truly interesting insights and his willingness to give his lecture on Zoom.

Mr Øygard's book has been translated into several languages, and can be purchased for NOK 250,- in book stores, on <https://combatzonebook.com/> or by VIPPS (for the English edition) to +47 900 24 009.

The Photo Club

The Photo Club has also been busy during the Corona crisis. We would like to show you some examples of what the ladies have been doing.



A picture tells a story



Sometimes a picture is too 'crowded' (left).



By Inge Pedersen and Anita Solheim

For the time being, we have held our workshops on Zoom. We have also been on a 'Photo Safari' to nice places in and around Oslo, which is a Covid-19-safe option. Once social gatherings will be allowed again, the workshops will be held at Gunnel Anita's home.

The theme in April was 'Photographing food.'

Anita Solheim

A Brush with Melancholy

By IF Member, Entrepreneur and Artist Rosi Løvdal

I am so happy to have found Liz, the perfect person who will love and use and share all my wonderful silk painting equipment. “I can’t believe this is true,” she said, dazzling in her happiness to have this treasure gifted to her – an entire studio of custom designed and custom-made equipment for painting silk, not possible to buy anywhere.



Coral Reef – a 6 x 10 ft silk painting by Rosi Løvdal

I did not have a second thought that Liz Grunwald was the right one. Or that it is the right decision for me to give all this treasure to someone who will be as deeply pleased to use this equipment as I had been. It is time for it to come into new hands.

I went into the store room to mark the boxes to be carried out to give to her. I scanned the shelves, reached up, took down a box, and carefully lifted the lid off.

My brushes.

The distinct odour of dyes and chemicals wafted up to me. My heart flew open, with memory, perhaps longing. I looked at all my brushes, stacked neatly, remembered packing them away five years ago, carefully, after my spinal cord surgery which stopped me from painting. I stroked them with my fingertips as I always did when I picked one up to use it, bending the tip gently between my thumb and index finger. My hand naturally gripped the handle, the reflex of holding it at the right angle with just the right pressure, flexing my wrist to test the stroke.

The slender brushes with fine exquisite points, just right for the finest work. Their bamboo handles cool to my touch. A different grasp for this brush, the tip

held at a straight angle, so only the fine point touches the silk, for just the right detail.

The most special brushes, my special angels.

There is nothing to compare with these brushes, you know the instant you touch them to silk with the dye colour perfectly distributed in the fine hairs of the thick head of the brush. They are the perfect match for one another; these brushes, the brilliant dye colours, and the silk.



Giving a legacy

These brushes are a work of art in themselves, made in one small village in Japan, using the actual hair of the pearl diving amas, which had been cured for 50 years before being woven into these brushes. I had taken the long train journey there from Tokyo, to buy these brushes, choosing each one carefully, the attentive brush maker looking on, nodding his head with a slight smile, pleased with my choices.

I had brought them home in my backpack from Japan, wrapped in rice paper.

The ordinary brushes bought at the paint store, for heavier harsher work, I touched them lightly. So lovingly familiar to me. A few who had not behaved well through the years, their bristles separating, but I had kept them anyway. And here are the brushes filled with hardened wax, waiting to be gently melted down, freeing their bristles for their next task of placing hot wax in a pattern on

the silk to capture form. The smell of beeswax was lovely and pungent and so profoundly filled with memory.

I placed the lid back on my box of brushes, felt it shut firmly, and sat down on the floor. My heart so full of love and sensual memory, melancholy and now sadness. My hands fresh with the touch of these old dear friends. I took a deep breath in and let it out slowly. Now I see, there will be a mourning time.



Liz Grundwald from France and Trinidad, Rosi from the US and Bahamas

Am I to give them all away? Will I never use them again? I felt as if I were looking at the end of my time. No, no, I cautioned myself rather firmly. Allow yourself the mourning. Just go through it. This is not about the end of life. It is the beginning of new possibility.

I turned off the lights. Closed the door. Hands in my coat pockets, thoughtful.

I will do this more patiently, savour it. Allow the memories to fill me with the smells, the senses, the touch that have given me so much pleasure for so many years. 50 years. May is my birthday month. Even I find my age a bit shocking.

I decide that I will keep a few of my best brushes, perhaps two, take them out of storage and into my living space, where I can see them, enjoy them, touch them, as a part of the beauty of my life.

Then, and Now.

Liz called to say that after we have moved my equipment, her textile collective would like me to do a workshop to teach them my silk painting technique. Liz and I agree that we will do that together.

A brush with the Circle of Life.

Rosi Løvdal

IMPRESSIONS OF NORWAY

Norwegian Nostalgia

Letter from Jocelyn Batoon-Garcia, Former Ambassador of the Philippines

Dear Members of the International Forum,

I have returned home to the Philippines after almost three years of service at the Philippine Embassy in Oslo. Now that I am settling down at home and looking at the jungle behind my house, the only one in the middle of the metropolis, I cannot but recall my visits to the different lakes and forests of Norway. Oslo is indeed lucky to have so many lakes and forests surrounding it.



Ambassador Garcia at Filipino Fiesta

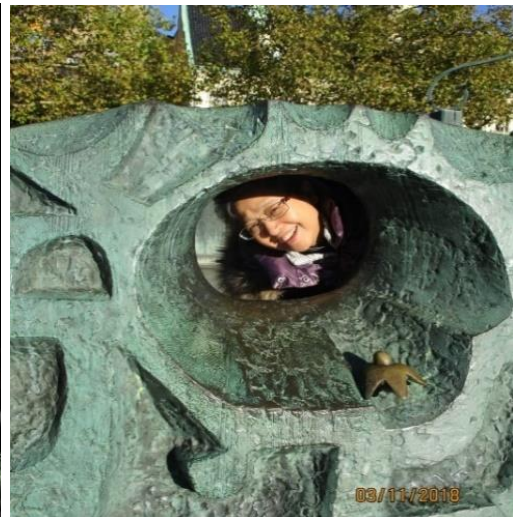
The fjords have left an indelible mark in my memory. The view of Oslo Fjord from my apartment window is unforgettable, as well as my walks from the statue of Fortuna past Kongens Marina, Tjuvholmen beach and onwards to Bjørvika and Havneveien.

The cruises around the fjord and the visits to the islands of Hovedøya, Lindøya, Gressholmen and Langøyene were indeed enjoyable. Strolls around the Bygdøy peninsula were very pleasant in any season. I especially liked the sunset view from Huk Strand.

My fondness for history often brought me to the museums at Bygdøy; every visitor to Oslo insisted on seeing the Viking and Kon-Tiki Museums. Hollywood made the Vikings familiar characters for Filipino movie goers. For a better understanding of that aspect of Norwegian history, I usually recommended that the visitors go to the National Museum and University of Oslo's Cultural History Museum before going to Bygdøy. The lesser-known Holocaust Museum was equally intriguing for me after having visited the Resistance Museum at Akershus Festning, especially when the Embassy was preparing to show the movie *Quezon's Gamble*.



Rhapsody in Blue



I See You

A visit to the Military Museum led me to the Kongsten Fortress in Frederikstad, Oscarsborg and Østre Kanonbatten, as well as the Wergeland House. The older burial mounds (tumuli) in Eastern Norway were also intriguing. I joined the other lady ambassadors on a road trip through Eastern Finnmark from Alta via Karasjok to Kirkenes, I must say I have seen some incredible scenery in the Norwegian countryside.

I was told that I should not leave Norway without seeing the *aurora borealis*. I therefore hoped to be able to visit Svalbard, Kirkenes or Tromsø in the winter to see this natural phenomenon. Sadly, the trip to Svalbard was cancelled due to travel restrictions. In Tromsø, I was able to see the northern lights, but not in Kirkenes.

I enjoyed my stay in Norway most of all because of my friends and associates, like yourselves. I will not forget the various International Forum events that I had the pleasure of joining, and the hospitality and kindness extended to me.



With a Sami family in Karasjøk



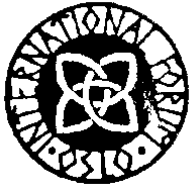
Ambassador Garcia at IF's 40th anniversary with
Patricia, Anita S. and Kerstin

The 40th Anniversary reception which I attended with my husband, Evan, was fun! The joint fundraising charity event between the different embassies and International Forum showed the positive benefits of cooperation. Members of the International Forum also honoured me personally with their presence during my lecture on Philippine Textiles and at the Philippine Independence Day Celebration.

I look forward to meeting everyone again and to inviting you all to visit the Philippines when the situation allows us to travel again.

Please keep safe.

Jocelyn Batoon-Garcia



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The Editor and the Editorial Team reserve the right to edit **all** material.

Date: May 12, 2021