

STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION FOR COLLECTIVE RECOVERY

Welcoming Remarks

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Chair, Stratbase ADR Institute

23 November 2020

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Pilipinas Conference, which is running on its fifth year. This year, we are holding it under very different circumstances. For the first time, we are not meeting face-to-face. Instead, we are coming together virtually to keep each other away from potential risks brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

For the first time, too, we have five half-days in our agenda compared to just one day in previous years. And because our conference is virtual, we are able to accommodate more guests. I am happy to greet our domestic and international audience in this conference, both from the public and private sectors.

Although the name of this event is Pilipinas Conference, our coverage goes beyond the Philippines.

Since we are all living in a global community now, what happens in the Philippines affects other countries, and what happens in other countries affects Filipinos. Because of globalization, people and nations are interconnected in almost all aspects of life, thanks to the internet and digital technology.

This Pilipinas Conference is a platform that brings together thought leaders from civil society, private sector, and government for the purpose of sharing ideas, collaboration and genuine discourse across all sectors of society. Our interest is to help civil society and the private sector find common grounds with government to forge collaboration for developing sustainable solutions to matters of urgent concern for people in the form of public policy, among others.

I thank our speakers and moderators for accepting our invitation at this very extraordinary time.

With or without the pandemic, certain things are bound to happen. A few weeks ago, an election was held in the world's oldest living democracy.

Earlier, a leadership change also took effect in Japan after a new prime minister was installed. And here, as technological advances are democratized around the world, more people and governments embrace digital technology that, in turn, leads to optimum efficiency, transparency, and accountable governance. There are heart-breaking situations, though, arising from natural disasters that happen, like the typhoons that passed by recently, which disrupted the social and economic life of many Filipinos.

On the other hand, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, certain things did not materialize this year. The Olympic Games in Tokyo was postponed to a more opportune time. The Philippines' upgrade to higher middle-income economy will be delayed, as the country entered a recession this year. Globally, many business expansions have been put on hold until after a more positive business climate emerges.

And so, it becomes necessary for all of us to speak on the same wavelength as members of a responsible community of nations, whether on matters of pandemic control, inclusive development, security, or human rights.

Today, we get together to try to anticipate what the future will bring by seriously examining our recent past: where we did right and where we missed out on opportunities. In the process, we need to work together in harmonized collaboration to achieve an inclusive and sustainable economic recovery in the new normal.

As for the Philippines, there is a strong need for a whole-of-society approach in dealing with its immediate and long-term concerns, especially on matters pertaining to the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on society and the economy. Like the mature democracies before us, we need to uphold the rule of law in all business, government and social processes.

Hopefully, at the end of this five-day conference, we shall have discerned well from the events that caught the whole world unexpectedly at the start of the year and brought us all in the bind that we are in today. May we always bear in mind the dictum that those who do not learn from the mistakes of the past are bound to repeat them and pay a heavy price.

The Filipino tradition of communal unity and cooperation summed up in the concept of the Bayanihan can help pave the way for a strong rebound to overcome the crises that come our way. Essentially, that Bayanihan spirit has been the secret of our durability as a people during times of immense difficulties. Because of this, we survived and recovered before, and so we will survive and recover again.

On behalf of Stratbase ADR Institute led by its president, Prof. Dindo Manhit, I am delighted to welcome everyone to this annual Pilipinas Conference. END