

(Message of Governor Nestor A. Espenilla, Jr. read on his behalf by fellow GRIPS Alumna, Dir. Judith E. Sungsaí, BSP Central Point of Contact Department I (CPCD I) at the 2017 PSPA International Conference, launch of the GRIPS Philippines Alumni Association, 17 November 2017, BSA Towers, Ortigas Avenue, Mandaluyong City.

TOGETHER REACHING HEIGHTS

It was in 1988, in Japan, while I was a graduate student at the Graduate School of Policy Science (GSPS) of the University of Saitama - the predecessor of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), that I had the opportunity to climb Mount Fuji. This is a memory that I will always cherish. The hike had varied degrees of difficulty... There were areas that were steep and quite challenging... There were some where a relaxed pace was possible, offering enjoyable and breathtaking views. Other than the rewarding feeling of having reached the summit, what I valued about the ascent was being able to do it with like-minded people from all over the world. We had a singular goal, which was to scale the mountain and reach the top (whilst having a great time)... No matter our differences, we managed to bridge them (hurdling some language barriers), offering each other help, and even sharing snacks along the way.

Come to think of it, my trek up Mount Fuji was a lot like taking my Masters at the University of Saitama (even the part about sharing food!) At GSPS, I bonded with other students who were going through the same

fascinating experience of living in a different country, adjusting to a new culture, learning new and difficult concepts under the pressure of again being graded and subjected to examinations, group work and thesis writing... (not to mention going through the same difficulty of belt tightening required of most grad students) and together, having occasional bouts of homesickness...

Common experiences bind us. But more than shared past backgrounds, I believe that what gives a group a stronger and more persevering tie - is a common purpose. This is why I so welcome and laud tonight's launching of the GRIPS Philippines Alumni Association... If it were not for a previous pressing foreign engagement that coincided with this evening, I would have been here to celebrate this momentous occasion with you all...

The GRIPS Philippines Alumni Association is GRIPS' first organised group of ambassadors of our premier policy school to the Philippines.. So tonight is truly a milestone. We are a diverse group of varied expertise and disciplines, but a common trait we share is that with our GRIPS education, our orientation is to constantly and actively assume roles of leadership in the public sector.

We have the privilege of being instructed and schooled in the art and science of contemporary policy issue analysis so that we can generate

solutions that are practical, context-sensitive and innovative.

As GRIPS Filipino alumni, I believe I can safely say, we are all united by the common desire to work together for a better Philippines, one where growth can be more inclusive, where no one is left behind. As individuals, we can make a difference and lead in our respective fields... but as a group, our contributions can be far-reaching and enduring. Together, as a group we can reach higher heights...

Cooperation and collaboration is always a central theme in all the messages I have recently delivered as BSP Governor. In the BSP, I have the privilege of working with dedicated and highly competent public servants. Among them, no less than thirteen (13) fellow GRIPS alumni. Our Deputy Governor for the Resource Management Sector, Dr. Cyd Amador is a GRIPS Alumna, Public Policy 1988. Currently, we have two BSP personnel taking their masters at GRIPS.

At the BSP, we actively shape, design and implement monetary, banking and financial policies to promote price and financial stability, to conduct effective banking supervision and regulation for a more robust banking and financial industry, and to ensure the efficiency and safety of our payments settlements system.

Because of active and targeted structural reforms through the years, we enjoy solid and robust Philippine macroeconomic fundamentals. The country's GDP growth has been positive for 74 consecutive quarters (18.5 years). This growth is expected to continue at 6.5 – 7.5 percent this year and 7.0 – 8.0 percent for the rest of the medium-term.

This growth is complemented by manageable inflation which is, and is predicted to remain within the government's target range of 3.0 ± 1.0 percentage points in 2017 to 2019.

Moreover, indicators such as the non-performing loan ratios, non performing asset ratios and capital adequacy ratios show that Philippine banks continue to be sound, stable and well-functioning.

The peso is also expected to be stable over the policy horizon with the exchange rate fundamentally driven and market determined. Our level of foreign exchange reserves is adequate at US\$80.6 billion as of end-October 2017, equivalent to 8.4 months of import cover.

But amidst these positive indicators, poverty incidence and unemployment rates are still high. Social inequalities plague us, one in five Filipinos living in poverty, with families having less than P9,064 a month on average to spend on basic needs. A

significant portion of our population remains unbanked and without access to appropriate financial products and services.

There is so much more to be done.

Our vision, individually and collectively in the BSP is to provide a catalyst for a financial system that delivers inclusive growth... a high quality of life for all Filipinos... Similar to the expressed goal of the National Government's Ambisyon Natin 2020... I think this ties powerfully with tonight's agenda of "deepening the discourse on governance, public sector reform and citizen engagement" ... with specific reference to bringing "about development, especially to habitually neglected communities." The urgency of bringing about more inclusion is resounding. Great (GRIPS) minds think alike!

While we at the BSP have issued regulations, implemented policies and launched initiatives to bring about more financial inclusion, I am excited at the projects that we, as an alumni association can work on together. With our varied networks, expertise and backgrounds our unity in a common passion will surely be met with success.

I am excited at the events and innovative projects we will organise to contribute to even greater democratic governance in the Philippines... I look forward to future CSRs and community outreaches... even

recruitment programs, informational lunches and dinners. As a group we will be able to strengthen ties with the Embassy of Japan, perhaps in collaboration hold benefits and service-oriented activities for local communities.

I also look forward to receiving our first Alumni Newsletter which I am sure will contain the same thought-provoking and intellectual writings we were exposed to in Tokyo. Alumni associations and networks are effective social links, platforms for the dissemination of valuable information and goals. Alumni associations generate a higher level of interaction that produces longer-lasting relationships. It is truly exciting that we launch our own today!

Again, together with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, and especially my fellow BSP GRIPS Alumni, I celebrate with you all. Congratulations on the launching of the GRIPS Philippines Alumni Association. Thank you especially to Dr. Alex Brillantes who extended the gracious invitation for me to deliver this message. Arigatou gozaimasu and konbanwa.