

Welcome and Opening Remarks: Building up and Moving on from the Crises

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My fellow Trustees in the Board, PHILEXPORT members, our special guests and speakers, partners in government and the private sector, guests, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the PHILEXPORT National Board of Trustees, it is with great pleasure that I welcome everyone to our last General Membership Meeting for this year.

The Christmas season brings cheers, good tidings and opportunities to be especially thankful even for the smallest miracles and gifts that we receive everyday. But I admit that it is indeed difficult to be a cheerleader these days, especially if you are in the company of exporters who have been through the worst times the past months and years.

However, we at PHILEXPORT are very pleased to note from recent newspaper reports about the IMF's national growth forecasts of 1.5% in 2009 and 3.5% next year, hopefully signaling a global rebound starting this quarter. Locally, this will be supported by the possible improvement in the output of the manufacturing sector, as factories build up inventories for Christmas and consumer and government spending heightens towards the May elections. Our exporters may be able to find

additional local business within this period, as many have proven the domestic market to be a viable option to exports particularly when crisis comes.

Having said this, let me anyway wave my cheerleader's hat and hope that all of us can hold on further, even as we are aware how difficult it is and it has been for companies that could not do anything anymore but close shop or retrench workers already. It is a cliché but is still true that after the storm, there appears a rainbow to remind us that good things are yet to come. Considering the Filipino people's resiliency in even more difficult situations in the past, I know that we can once again overcome.

To help provide some inspiration to all of us, we have chosen two well-known speakers to give us insights on two topics that are the subjects of their best-selling books. They will be properly introduced later. We thank them in advance for their generosity and wisdom to be shared with all of us tonight.

As Filipinos, we have mastered the art of doing business with some leisure, and this meeting can be one of the venues for such. In fact, we credit our resiliency to our ability to enjoy life, even as we dutifully attend to our responsibilities in our own corners and spheres of influence.

You must have noticed from our Program that unlike the previous years, we are doing away with the traditional meeting-cum-Christmas party, as the Board sees it inappropriate today, considering the series of tragedies and crises that our country went through. Nevertheless, let me announce that we are sharing a simple Christmas dinner after the meeting,

including some raffle as a small flavoring of the season. Plus of course, our GMM always offers an opportunity for us to fellowship across sectors and chapters, a reason to take a good break from our daily routines.

Before I close, let me also invite you to our PHILEXPORT National elections this January 19 at the Sofitel Hotel, from 4 p.m. I hope that all of you have already submitted the necessary election documents, particularly the proxy forms. This form will ensure that you are represented in the elections, even if you are not physically present. However, absent this form, you can still vote by attending the actual election.

Finally, may I invite you to again count and share our blessings not only because it is Christmas, but because we know that as good stewards of God's gifts, this is the right thing to do. We especially want to thank the members who responded to our call for donations for the flood victims. These goods were distributed directly by our employees to affected families in Marikina, Pasig and Quezon City. We hope that as we spread this goodwill, it will come back to us positively and will manifest in many other wonderful ways to our families and others in need.

On behalf of the PHILEXPORT Board, management and staff, I wish all of you an advance Merry Christmas and a really much better 2010 and beyond!

Thank you and good evening.