

MESSAGE OF THE HONORABLE OMBUDSMAN
Conchita Carpio-Morales
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Theme: *“Challenges for the Ombudsman in a Changing Socio-Economic Environment”*

Good day to my esteemed colleagues in the public sector, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the 12th Conference of the Asian Ombudsman Association! Let me express, on behalf of the delegates, our profound thanks and congratulations to our colleagues from Tokyo, Japan and the Secretariat for the warm hospitality and reception. I am pleased to inform you that the proposed AOA Core Principles of Ombudsmanship was discussed last year during the AOA Regional Meeting held in the Philippines with technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank.

The past year saw the region beset with natural calamities, from inundations to earthquakes and tsunamis. We are still reeling from their consequences. Because we live in a global village, we also feel, in varying degrees, the effects of the American economic depression, the European financial crisis and the political unrest in Africa and the Middle East.

Hence, the theme for this year - *“Challenges for the Ombudsman in a Changing Socio-Economic Environment”* - could not have been a better choice. The core principles that bind us together – clarity of mandate, independence, accountability, accessibility and effectiveness – are all directed towards improved public service delivery. Public administration

that is transparent and accountable is crucial in responding adequately to calamities. Good management of resources and provision of services impact greatly on the number of lives saved and property damage mitigated.

The ombudsman is in a strategic position to ensure that the world's limited natural resources are marshaled under a responsive and sustainable stewardship. Instead of just being reactive, the ombudsman must assume a more proactive role in safeguarding the distribution of resources and provision of basic necessities and quality services to the public by observing the highest degree of accountability and transparency.

The challenges to keep abreast with technology and apply it in the discharge of our functions, especially in improving our service delivery either in public assistance or investigation, become imperative, as enemies of accountability use technology advancement to perpetuate violations of public trust.

Now, more than ever, we need good governance to respond effectively to any disaster, whether natural or manmade, and to enable countries to bounce back from any debilitating effects. The AOA annual conference has always been a much-valued platform for sharing knowledge and best practices which contribute to the robustness and resiliency of its members to address whatever challenges it may confront.

I trust that the sessions will enrich and equip us with useful information we can apply when we go back to our respective countries.

I wish everyone a very productive conference ahead of us. *Konichiwa.*