



Press Statement

26 September 2011

MBC REITERATES ITS STRONG STAND AGAINST CORRUPTION

The Makati Business Club will never compromise its fundamental and unwavering opposition to corruption, be it in the public or private sectors. Over the past thirty years, we have consistently and steadfastly expressed very strong positions on issues of corruption, even at the cost of displeasing powerful vested interests. MBC remains resolute in this conviction.

We are reiterating this position in light of recent news reports that would make it appear that MBC has softened its stand against corruption.

On 7 September 2011, the Integrity Initiative Steering Committee organized a press conference in Makati City to publicize the 1st Integrity Summit, which was to be held on 14 September 2011. MBC chairman Ramon del Rosario Jr was one of the panelists in that press conference, the Makati Business Club being one of the organizations spearheading the Integrity Initiative campaign and Mr. del Rosario being the chairman of the Integrity Initiative Steering Committee.

Asked by a reporter about his views on the government's progress in fighting corruption, Mr. del Rosario's exact reply was:

"If there's any problem at all, it's the pace of doing projects. There is such a concern for corruption, that we all noted that for the first half of this year, government spending was really very slow. And in fact that is one of the concerns from the private sector now, that while it is appropriate to make sure that we undertake projects that are hopefully free of corruption, I don't think we should do this to the extreme where no projects would get implemented because, obviously, government spending is extremely important.

"We do need to spend particularly for infrastructure and we have been, in our conversations with various government departments, stressing the need for government to accelerate spending because it is necessary to spend for infrastructure, but it is also necessary for growth in the overall economy. That's a balancing act that they have to do, but as I said, the bias seems to be towards reducing corruption to the extent that they have spent so little so far, and now we have to tilt the balance a little bit to the other side where they have to accelerate spending, even sometimes at the risk of some corruption creeping in, because it's really impossible to do it totally corruption-free."

The statement does not condone corruption, but it acknowledges that some risk exists that projects will not be 100% corruption-free. It expresses concern that an extreme fear of corruption may cause government to be frozen into inaction on much needed infrastructure spending. The primary message is that government spending, especially for infrastructure, should now be

pursued more aggressively because it is essential to spur economic growth. We agree that the government should take all necessary and reasonable precautions to safeguard the integrity of its proposed big-ticket infrastructure projects, but it is also imperative that we start moving forward on the programs that will help lift our country from the clutches of poverty.

What is important is that both government and the private sector remain vigilant and continue to work together to ensure that these projects are not tainted by corruption at all stages of implementation. And if despite our combined efforts corruption manages to infiltrate the process, then we must make sure that violators are held accountable in court.

This is precisely why MBC and its partners have been pursuing with even greater vigor our various anti-corruption initiatives, including the strengthening and institutionalization of a culture of integrity in the private sector, as well as the monitoring of government procurement processes and systems. The government needs our support and we in the private sector have responded by taking action and carrying our share of the burden in the fight against corruption.

The only way forward is through the straight and narrow path of honesty, transparency, and accountability. MBC has always abided by this, continues to live by this, and we will keep fighting for this.

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