



Joint Statement

23 August 2013

CONGRESS MUST HEED THE PEOPLE'S CALL

Joint Statement of the Philippine Business Groups

Echoing the call made in 2010, the people have again made their voices heard: ensure greater accountability and transparency in government.

We strongly believe that the Constitution is clear in declaring that public office is a public trust, and that funds entrusted to these elected representatives must be used with utmost prudence. Although the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) serves as a complement to national development efforts by giving due attention to local needs, the system has been corrupted by unscrupulous individuals, both inside and outside of government. Thus, there is a great and urgent necessity to institute reforms to better protect public funds.

In this light, we commend the Aquino administration for taking a bold stance towards greater accountability and transparency. The business community fully supports the abolition of the PDAF, as well as the subsequent establishment of the new mechanism proposed by P-Noy that will address the needs of various localities and sectors. It is our position that the measures to limit discretion and to open the entire process of allocating development assistance to public scrutiny will lead to a more judicious and transparent management of public funds. We also commend the leaders in Congress for helping initiate this reform. We, therefore, urge the respective members of both chambers to adopt the new measures into the 2014 General Appropriations Act and beyond.

Furthermore, we support the joint investigation being conducted by the Department of Justice, the Office of the Ombudsman, and the Commission on Audit. It is our hope that those found to have been involved in this scandal, whether private individuals or public figures, regardless of political affiliation, be prosecuted and convicted to the law's fullest extent.

Taking into account the crucial role of the press in bringing this issue into the national spotlight, as well as facilitating public discourse and involvement, the PDAF controversy illustrates to us the power of information as a check on abuses in government. Thus, we renew our call for the swift passage of the Freedom of Information Bill. We believe that this piece of legislation, complemented by ongoing reforms in the management of public funds, will indeed institutionalize the highest standards of transparency and accountability that should bind current and succeeding administrations.

Moving forward, we call on the people to continue their vigilance in ensuring the integrity of the management and utilization of public resources. We fervently hope that with the quick resolution of this scandal, integrity and transparency will become the primary standard in our country.

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Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP)
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Institute of Corporate Directors (ICD)
Makati Business Club (MBC)
Management Association of the Philippines (MAP)
People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP)
Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants (PICPA)
Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines, Inc. (SEIPI)