

## OPEN FORUM

### **Ka Ernie Ordoñez of Alyansa Agrikultura**

How will you [the organizers] put all the recommendations into actions? We do not want to be DOMs [dead of meetings]. How can you be made accountable for our recommendations? I want to know the follow up actions so we can be able to help you.

**Dean Brillantes:** As pointed out earlier, this UNDP launching and roundtable discussion will also be a tool for advocacy. The debate is obviously not over. I think a lot of this will come out as suggestion points which will be considered by the major stakeholders in the government, and non- government organizations.

This is some kind of a tool for advocacy. The whole idea is for us to push this as a form of advocacy in whatever level we are. These will be addressed by the concerned agencies of government. The DTI was here, and so were the other government agencies present. There was a debate this morning with DTI about what strategies to follow. I think it being an academic setting; it is part of our job that this will be surfaced.

One major statement pointed out by Prof. Briones is that we can talk about everything, from MDGs, to the strategies, but if this does not go into the budget, we can just go home. This forum really is a tool for advocacy and for us to be able to see and hear recommendations on what programs or projects are really worth funding for development.

### **Milo Tanchuling, Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC)**

It can be seen based on the recommendations of the three groups that the recommendations are sectoral in nature. What is missing is that everyone is talking of a roadmap, the competitiveness of each sector but the way of looking at it as one nation, the different sectors being inter-related is missing. Maybe that is one aspect we have to work on. What is the national trade competitive edge of the Philippines? Secondly, we have talked about those that we have experienced in trade. Maybe this is the time for us to articulate and ask what the impact and our assessment. Does the government have an appraisal assessment? What are the possibilities of opening these up? Perhaps we can also take into consideration the budget appropriated for the different sectors vis a vis our very big budget deficit.

### **Ka Jojo Labay, Farmers Sector Council**

The mining industry affects trade and the plight of the poor Filipinos. Included in this is the issue on agriculture, manufacturing and services and the environment. I suggest that we also include these on our recommendations and proposed plans so that those affected by the mining industry especially the farmers can also benefit from this.

### **Dr. Prospero de Vera of UP NCPAG**

I mentioned in the agriculture sector panel that the review of the experts on the AFMA has already been completed. It has been submitted three weeks ago. The AFMA has a provision of automatic review after three years of implementation by a group of experts recommended by congress and appointed by the president. To my recollection this is the only major law in the past couple of years where an independent panel actually made a review of the law. The law is already there and this must be included in the agenda. It must be presented in a forum like this. The stakeholders will get a copy of the law, react to it and demand accountability because a lot of the agricultural issues we are discussing are contained in the review including questions of productivity, competitiveness, budget, institutional arrangement, etc. this should be included in the agenda. Instead of re- inventing the wheel and analyzing the problem again, some of the issues there have been analyzed exhaustively.

### **Steve from the Embassy of Canada**

I would like to say a word of encouragement on the issue of transparency especially when it comes to the issue of trade policies. Fifteen years ago when I joined the Canadian government, we also this corporate culture that information has to be guarded but as we evolved overtime, we begun to get inputs from the private sector and from the civil society. Now, every time we go into trade negotiations, our position is published on the internet for all Canadians to see. What I am telling is that it is possible. We have better products because of the different inputs from civil society that we get. Transparency has not harmed us. I encourage you all to raise your expectations on what you can get from government.

### **Dr. Ebinezer Florano**

We have questions here. For the manufacturing sector, is there a possibility for the workers to have housing near the work site? There is also a question on the right to access of information. And also the issue on Japan-Philippines economic agreement. Also as professor de Vera has stated or suggested, we must also include the AFMA in our agricultural sector.

**Mr. Serrano:** To answer the housing provisions on the manufacturing sector. I think that is the decision to be made by the investor, the proponent of the project in industrial enterprises. I do know that there are factories that provide some housing assistance to their employees. But this is more prevalent in far areas, in provinces. In metro manila that is less of a reality simply because we have a lesser space here. But the human face of business and industry remains strong and that this concern for employees needs to be shared by government. As far as entrepreneurs are concerned, a happy and motivated workforce will make the enterprise more successful.

**DEAN Sibal:** My observation based on the report was that the workshop confirmed the findings of UNDP. I think there were no oppositions as to their findings.

Some of the findings over- all, liberalization has resulted to more disadvantages rather than advantages in the case of the Philippines. There were more failures than gains. Particularly on the workshop on manufacturing, the winners were not even

planned, they were somehow accidental. What was planned was not achieved. The reason why we went into liberalization is that we want to empower the poor; we want the gains of trade to trickle down where it should trickle down. Apparently the reverse has been the result. When it came to the actual workshop on what are the things to be done, it was actually the government who planned all these things, all the promises that we will have more advantages than disadvantages, which happened to be, in reality, the reverse. The workshop was tailored, perhaps, in such a way that the government be excluded from the planning because it was only for one year, 3 years and 5 years. The government must be concerned with planning for the long term. What will happen to the Philippines in the future? The output pertains to doables. When we talk about these, most of the actors involved were mainly the private sector, the NGOs and the academe. If you will notice, if there is government involved, they only come in on the third year, once the plans have already been conceptualized and somehow implemented by the other actors. If you include them from the very start, according to the industry people, what the industries want, the government does not want. This is the reason why the industries reached its present state. Instead of increasing, it has continuously declined.

**Jessica Cantos:** We are pushing for the creation of a trade representative office principally responsible in crafting a cohesive trade policy that is based on a transparent and consultative mechanism. Something that maximizes not only the inter- agency resources we have but also the experiences of the stakeholders. The access to information bill we are pushing for will really be helpful and complimenting to the trade representative office bill.

With regard to the budget, there is an NGO and progressive legislators' initiative that is being done. They have subdivided themselves into seven areas: agriculture, environment, general macro- economic framework, financing. It is being anchored by Social Watch Philippines. On the congress, the minority people. The budget process is a very difficult altogether. We are talking about trillions of pesos but a lot of it, 10% only is there for congressional powers to play around, doing cost effective spending not just at the national government level but also at the level of the local governments to the extent that IRA forms a very large part of the budget. We should also demand transparency on the spending of local government units.

The issue of transparency cuts across all sectors. How many of you have seen the budgets of local government units posted on the web? I think only Naga City does it, but the others do not do it. Even Marikina, the model city does not do it. People should start demanding transparency of the local government budget because there is a lot that can be seen here. Can you imagine that at the Sangguniang Panlalawigan, the board members have nice buildings and nice cars but the province has very poor farm to market roads and poor irrigations. The kind of spending they do on the IRA is despicable. They go to study tours, they go to Manila spending money, and they visit congress. I think it is not just the national government we should watch. We should also exact transparency in local governments. We should exploit the areas given to us in the local government code which we have not exploited.

## SYNTHESIS

**Dr. Alex B. Brillantes Jr.**  
Dean, UP NCPAG

Today is a day well spent. This was really a group effort to organize this. This is a very important launch. We are supposed to launch this "Trade on Human Terms". I must recognize the help of UNDP. We have Dr. Buendia of UNDP, as well as Dir. Jun Fernandez of NEDA. We occupy what we call a tripartite. We have the GOP of Dir Fernandez from NEDA, Dr. Buendia of UNDP, and me from NCPAG. Part of our advocacy is fostering democratic governance (FDG). Part of this advocacy is sponsoring, co- sponsoring forums such as this. You will agree with me that this is a very excellent forum.

I think that if there is anything that we as Filipinos should recognize is to a certain extent, a general failure of implementation. As I was listening to the discussions this morning, it reminded me so much of my undergraduate days in school. It reminded me of the debates back in the 60s and 70s. What we were talking about then was what development paradigm that we should follow. There is a whole debate. Some say to participate in the economic order, invest, stages to growth, etc. we have been talking of those things since the 1970s, and yet today we still hear that similar path in China. They continue to invest but there is still very high inequity in there. Is that the path that we will follow? In the 70s we have the alternative development path. I know many of you know about dependency theory, Marxian theory. It is as relevant today as it was before because when you talk about that, you talk about the costs of development. For whom is development? That is a major concern not only for students of public administration but also for economics. I think that is what we tried to answer in this forum. I think we cannot provide the significant answers in for a like these because it is not really providing the answers. But this provides an area to ask the right questions. Asking the right questions is the most important thing.

Dr. Montes talked about the 8-point agenda. We have heard this before. Combating jobless growth, invest in competitiveness, new tax regimes, cooperate with neighbors. We have heard of these before. Like cooperate with neighbors. As we begin to cooperate with neighbors, we begin to realize that it is not exactly cooperation but competition with our neighbors. Somebody said that we must be as solid as the EU, but then, we are competing.

Among the major issues we discussed, what is the impact of globalization? It came up in several forums. This came out in the manufacturing session as pointed out by my colleague, Dean Sibal. What is the impact of globalization? We talk about it from a very abstract to a very real example. What happens in the ukay- ukay? As pointed out by Dean Sibal, we may get cheap clothes, but who are we really helping here? It is not the consumer who really benefits but the producers who make use of our raw materials. These are just implications of the ukay- ukay. I talked to some farmers in Benguet asking them what the impact of globalization is. They say that they cannot continue to grow vegetables because they are flooded with vegetables that are imported. Is this then a negative impact of globalization? Should we let them compete? I think when we look at these cases; we should look at the people who are directly affected, the farmers, and fisher folks. This is one reason why trade should be for people. When we talk about being pro- people, we should think of the poor people, the poor farmers who are affected.

Trade could be anti- poor. What are the costs of trade? In the Philippines, we export manpower. But what is the social cost in terms of families, etc? One of the things pointed out by Dr. Florano is that what about the environmental costs?

Many of the things that came out here are governance concerns. That is our major point of interest here in the College of Public Administration. At the end of the day, it is not just economic growth that should be considered. This is now being acknowledged by the World Bank, ADB and the other multilaterals. We should also at governance concerns. Corruption is also a factor. We should have equity. People must be considered. These are things that were articulated as early as 70s. It is nice that these are already emerging. When you look at the multilateral organizations, governance now really matters, so they are already bringing in people from other disciplines like sociology, political science etc, because they are already beginning to see that not only economics matters. This emerges as a major lesson or message from the report.

In the different reports, agriculture talked about different concerns. They talked about institutional weaknesses and capabilities, need for database, and budget allocation. This really basic but nothing is being done. Manufacturing talked about the importance of capacity building, education, regulation and the role of governments. In services we talked about liberalization and the protection of overseas workers. These became extremely apparent with the very contemporary issue of bringing home our workers from Lebanon. What is going on here? Is there really protection?

All of these cut across a major concern of public administration, and also the restoration of faith in our government. I heard a very good anecdote in one of the breakout sessions this afternoon. It says that the reason why call centers are very successful right now is because government has not yet gone into them. When government comes in watch what happens. What we are saying is that we should try to listen to the question behind the question. Is government the problem? Maybe it is the problem. It is the obstacle.

What development paradigm do we follow? We have been talking about this for a very long time now. When is the Philippines ever going to take off? We are carrying a very heavy baggage. That is poor governance. What therefore are the major questions? We will never take off if we have bad governance. Hence the importance of talking about transparency, participation and accountability.

One question we asked earlier is that what is the development strategy that the Philippines followed? It was a revelation. I call our strategy an accidental or reactive strategy. Why? Because two major pillars in our strategy is the OCW and the call centers. As pointed out by Dean Sibal earlier, it was not even in our consciousness. We were planning of going into steel and manufacturing, but then we were hit blind-sided by the importance of the OCWs. What happens is that it almost becomes a development strategy that is imposed on us. It becomes strategy that we are reactive. It becomes a development strategy that we have been simply reacting despite the many bright people we have in our country. Are we losing our competitiveness? I think that is a very important question.

Earlier we have discussed that we are merely into assembly. We have not even assembled our own laptops. We have been assembling for a very long time. Are only for assembling? These are very hard questions we must ask ourselves. We may have been overtaken by what is happening in Lebanon, we have been enamored with the remittances of OCWs, we are enamored by the call center industry. As somebody once said the world is flat.

That is Friedman speaking. There is some truism in that because when we talk about trade on human terms, it must always be somehow talked about in the context of globalization. Globalization for whom? Globalization for us.

Dr. Butch Montes talked about these from the UNDP perspective. This is really a tool for advocacy. Trade he said should be sustainable, empowering, equitable and leads to production,

SEEP. Sustainable, equitable, empowering, productive. This is a tall order. Can we achieve it? That is the challenge for us. We should go back to the basic. At the end of the day we ask, development for whom? Development for the people. Whatever your discipline, public administration, labor, economics, trade, it is the human person that really matters.

It is a good thing that you all stayed on so that we can put a circle into this forum. Rest assured that the proceedings of this forum are made available to you. You can download it as well as our previous governance fora from the UP NCPAG website.

As the dean of the college, let me extend to you our appreciation for your attending and participating in this forum. This also goes to our partners for their support. Thank you very much.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

**Dir. Antonio Fernandez Jr.**  
NEDA

This event that unfolded today, trade and human development, poverty reduction is very close to our hearts and minds. Indeed this forum and roundtable discussion will become more significant if all sectors of society are well represented. We have not only shared our ideas and concerns when it comes to trade and development, but we have also strengthened our partnership in achieving what is best for the Filipino people.

In this 20<sup>th</sup> century, we are coping with the challenges and opportunities of globalization. Many countries are in the process of reinvention, innovation, privatization and regulatory reforms. I think that these reforms being undertaken should serve the needs of the people, particularly the poor. Serving the needs should be more, transparent, participative and responsive in a way.

To achieve our people centered development, we must—not only the government, but also with your help— formulate policy agenda or implement project interventions that would result to balance of work and welfare, growth and distribution, and social harmony and cohesion. This was emphasized by Dean Brillantes that we in the GOP- UNDP Fostering Democratic Governance Portfolio believe that participatory and transparent governance is the most important element or ingredient in really attaining our development goals. Especially those that had been committed by us in our participation in the UN endeavor. I am referring to the Millennium Summit Declaration which emphasized all callOs for respect for human rights, promotion of democracy and as well as good governance.

As we formally close this forum, the question that comes into our mind is where do we go from here? One cannot answer this alone. We all need to harmonize our initiatives and work as one. This is a challenge not only for the government but also for the basic sectors of civil society, the academe, our partners from donor agencies and also the private sector. All of us have one objective in mind and that is to make our trade and industry sector productive and asset forming. To have an end goal of having a piece for human development. However, if good governance is not put in place, there will be no human development in effect. We have to have good governance and transparency and accountability and participation of all actors especially those who are major stakeholders in this effort.

We are following some processes. We plan, we design programs, we budget resources, we implement, monitor and asses also the implementation of plans. All of these processes are geared towards a goal. Those processes will have to be improved. Our planning processes are evolving but there are still problems and weaknesses. That is part of this portfolio, to come up with different areas in sectors to make changes in our systems and procedures. As contained in our documents, we have three major strategic reform areas: public administration reforms, and part of our topic is on trade and corporate governance. Also looking at the reform on political and judicial systems. All of these reform areas are important if we want to have a good trading and industry as it relates to human development.

In behalf of the lead convenors and organizers of this forum: UNDP, UP NCPAG, FTA and NEDA, we would like to extend our outmost appreciation for your participation in this endeavor and we hope that the information and knowledge that we have acquired in this forum will be turned into positive actions for the betterment of our own people.

Maraming salamat po at mabuhay tayong lahat.