

KEYNOTE SPEECH

The 10th ASEAN-COCI Sub-Committee on Information

By

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Our Colleagues in the Sub-Committee on Information, Guests from the Diplomatic Community, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning to all.

On behalf of the Philippines, it is my pleasure to welcome you today at the opening ceremonies of the 10th Meeting of the ASEAN-COCI Sub-Committee on Information. Finally, after canceling the original schedule of the Meeting in December last year where half of the participants could not make it due to the airport situation in Thailand, I am very pleased that we were able to agree on this time to come together to pursue the agenda of this Meeting. We apologize for whatever inconvenience the cancellation may have cost some of us but I hope your stay here in the Clark Freeport Zone, a former United States Military Base situated in the heart of growing markets in the Asia-Pacific region, with its own airport, with many businesses located, and with interested shopping and entertainment at night easily within reach, would more than compensate for these inconveniences.

The SCI Meeting this week takes on new significance. The recent developments and decisions of our leaders such as the acceleration of the establishment of the ASEAN Community by 2015, the ratification and entry into force of the ASEAN charter, and the completion of the blueprints for realizing the three pillars of the ASEAN community pose new challenges to all of us in SCI. How can SCI do its share in building the ASEAN Community? Are current SCI programs sufficient and effective in communicating the information that our ASEAN people need to know to motivate them to participate in the regions priority areas for cooperation?

I think the role of information officers is very important. We can see it either of two ways. If your agency reflects the reality or what is going on, you're only doing half of the work. The power you have in your hands should be used to stimulate your regions. The power in your hands should be used to sell one important product – hope. If not, then I believe we are only doing half of our job. We should help spread development, promote peace, generate cooperation, and we should develop our countries.

What types of proposals are we submitting for funding consideration? Are these truly supportive of the needed community building efforts? These are just some of the questions and challenges that confront the SCI today and which we hope will find serious consideration in our 10th SCI Meeting.

While traditionally, SCI promotes cultural information, establishing the three pillars of ASEAN community would require expanding the information content to include other areas such as the economy, politics, security, health, environment, and the like.

I am sure we all agree that the SCI should be able to build a stable foundation for information and media cooperation. We need to build a community of ASEAN journalists with a strong sense of solidarity and identity. Media practitioners in various fields should get to know their counterparts in the other member states more closely through people to people contacts and more exposure to each other. This should ensure the efficient exchange of materials, consultations and other beneficial media and information activities among the member states.

May I again reiterate here the need for ASEAN to reformulate the National and Regional Communication Plans as agreed upon by the AMRI at its Meeting in Indonesia in May 2006. While the ASEAN-COCI has done a good job of promoting ASEAN awareness (as indicated in the general results of the Attitude and Knowledge Survey among Students conducted by the ASEAN Foundation on ASEAN in 2007), there is need to refocus the campaign on programs and action plans that would build the ASEAN community and help mobilize the ASEAN citizenry in the development process. And as I have always suggested, we could share stories about governments working in partnership with other sectors of society.

I know that you have a full schedule ahead of you but I hope you could find time to enjoy the hospitality and attractions that the Clark Freeport Zone has to offer.

Mabuhay and good day!