

## **Welcome Remarks**

### **Senator Edgardo J. Angara**

**SEAPAC Conference 2005**

**30 March 2005**

**Philippine International Convention Center (PICC)**

**Manila**

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I have long been looking forward to this conference. I am truly honored for having the opportunity to gather our ASEAN parliamentarians, and make a covenant to fight corruption in each of our own governments and societies. I thank the delegates for coming to Manila, as well as our guests, for making time to be here and show their commitment to this challenging, but deeply rewarding endeavor.

This is also a joyous chance to renew old ties and forge new ones. I extend a hearty welcome to the participants who were present at the founding of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) in Ottawa, Canada in October 2002. Indeed, it has been a long way from Ottawa to Manila.

As the Asian representative in GOPAC's Executive Board, I am delighted to have taken the lead in organizing our South East Asian Chapter - the first in Asia. We will take our place among GOPAC's other chapters namely the Canadian Chapter, Latin American Chapter, North Africa Chapter and Middle East Chapter.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to Senate President Franklin M. Drilon, for keynoting this historic conference.

I cannot adequately stress the need for us to address the issue of corruption and seek ways to eliminate it from our midst. It is profoundly necessary for us legislators to join hands against corruption, for it robs our people of limited resources, drives away investors both local and foreign, and scares away friends who want to visit our countries.

As parliamentarians, we can become exemplars and have the moral standing to hold our governments accountable, open and transparent.

At the time I sponsored the Government Procurement Reform Act in the Philippine Senate, I had to face tremendous pressure from government contractors who have links with incumbent members of biddings and awards committees. But today, the Procurement Reform Law, which overhauls the public bidding system, stands as the country's biggest anti-corruption measure.

The Ombudsman Law which I also sponsored in the Senate, similarly seek to cleanse our bureaucracy and set our politicians straight. The pending Political Party Development Act, by transforming political parties into public institutions, seek to create a breed of politicians rooted in ideology, instead of enchained in the interests of their financiers.

Needless to say, combating corruption is a daunting task. But our goals are not beyond reach. Just as corruption transcends borders, so too must we fight it on a transnational level.

Let us learn from each other and synchronize our efforts. Let us exert political will and confront this most pressing need of our day. Let us make the fight against corruption our most immediate undertaking.

Thank you and good morning!