

MESSAGE

ANICETO M. SOBREPEÑA

PRESIDENT, METROBANK FOUNDATION

Fourteenth Metrobank Foundation Professorial Chair Lecture

DECEMBER 7, 2017, 9:00 AM

SUPREME COURT EN BANC SESSION HALL, PADRE FAURA, MANILA

(SALUTATIONS)

HONORABLE CHIEF JUSTICE MARIA LOURDES SERENO,

HONORABLE ADOLFO S. AZCUNA, CHANCELLOR OF THE PHILIPPINE JUDICIAL ACADEMY,

HONORABLE ROMEO J. CALLEJO, SR., VICE CHANCELLOR OF THE PHILIPPINE JUDICIAL ACADEMY,

HONORABLE AMPARO M. CABOTAJE-TANG, PRESIDING JUSTICE OF THE SANDIGANBAYAN

HONORABLE MAGDANGAL M. DE LEON, ASSOCIATE JUSTICE OF THE COURT OF APPEALS

JUDGES FROM THE LOWER COURTS,

COLLEAGUES FROM THE METROBANK GROUP,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GOOD MORNING!

THE METROBANK FOUNDATION IS VERY MUCH HONORED TO WELCOME THIS YEAR'S PROFESSORIAL CHAIR HOLDER, JUSTICE ROMEO CALLEJO, JR., TO OUR ROSTER OF DISTINGUISHED CHAIR HOLDERS SINCE 2004. HE WILL BE DISCUSSING AT LENGTH ON THE ISSUE OF JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION.

WE ARE GRATEFUL AS WELL TO THE PHILIPPINE JUDICIAL ACADEMY FOR THE MEANINGFUL AND PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP THIS PAST DECADE. THIS IS A TESTAMENT TO METROBANK FOUNDATION'S UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO LEAD THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN ADVANCING NATIONAL DISCOURSE ON CONCERNS THAT AFFECT FILIPINOS, PARTICULARLY THOSE ON THE RULE OF LAW. FOR 13 YEARS NOW, THE FOUNDATION HAS PARTNERED WITH PHILJA TO PROVIDE INTELLECTUAL AND FACT-BASED DISCUSSIONS ON THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES FACING OUR COUNTRY, RANGING FROM CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

"WHO WILL WATCH THE WATCHMEN?" — OR IF YOU WILL, "WATCHWOMEN" — IS A PHRASE ATTRIBUTED TO JUVENAL, A FIRST CENTURY ROMAN POET. ISN'T THIS A

PROVOKING QUESTION? IT IS ONE THAT MUST CONSTANTLY BE ASKED IN A DEMOCRACY. INDEED, JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PARTAKES OF A DELICATE BALANCING ACT. MAGISTRATES MUST NOT BE BEHOLDEN TO THOSE IN POWER. THEY SHOULD BE FREE TO MAKE IMPARTIAL DECISIONS WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR. BUT THIS INDEPENDENCE, HOWEVER, SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO CERTAIN LIMITS.

NOTED POLITICAL SCIENTIST ANDREW HEYWOOD DEFINES ACCOUNTABILITY AS ANSWERABILITY, A DUTY TO EXPLAIN ONE'S CONDUCT AND BE OPEN TO CRITICISM. ANSWERABILITY TO WHOM, WE MAY ASK? THIS COULD BE TO HIGHER OR CO-EQUAL BODIES OF GOVERNMENT, TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, TO THE MEDIA, TO THE NATION.

BUT THERE CAN ONLY BE ACCOUNTABILITY WHERE THERE IS A STRONG CULTURE OF ADHERENCE TO THE FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF THE LAND. THOSE WHO WATCH THE WATCHMEN MUST HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION SO THAT THEY CAN MAKE INFORMED JUDGMENTS. THERE MUST ALSO BE AN EFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF SANCTIONS IN PLACE.

SO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE WATCHMEN OR WATCHWOMEN—OUR JUDICIARY, THE BRANCH MANDATED TO UPHOLD AND DEFEND THE LAW—STEP OUT OF BOUNDS, LOSE THEIR IMPARTIALITY, AND ABUSE THEIR POWER? IF PROVEN GUILTY BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT, WHAT SHOULD THE SANCTIONS BE AGAINST SUCH PERPETRATORS? THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS THAT OUR DISTINGUISHED CHAIR HOLDER, JUSTICE CALLEJO WILL ANSWER, ALONG WITH HIS RECOMMENDATIONS MOVING FORWARD.

EVERYONE PRESENT IN THIS HALL, I BELIEVE, HAS A SPHERE OF INFLUENCE AND SERVES AS A WATCHMAN IN HIS OR HER OWN RIGHT. SO I APPEAL TO OUR JUDICIARY FRIENDS—SERVE WITH ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY, SO YOU WILL RECEIVE NOTHING BUT PRAISES FROM THOSE WATCHING OVER YOU.

THANK YOU AND HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL MORNING.