

Keynote Speech

By: **Commissioner ROLAND C. PONDOC**
Commission on Audit

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Government Association of Certified Public Accountants (GACPA)
Grand Ballroom, Century Park Hotel
P. Ocampo St., Malate, Manila

“Promoting Integrity, Advancing Excellence”

GACPA officers, co-civil servants, ladies and gentlemen, Good Morning!Maayong Buntag sa atong tanan!

It was with pleasure that I accepted the invitation as your keynote speaker in this 1-day Conference, with a theme “Promoting Integrity, Advancing Excellence”. I am pleased to participate in this conference, not only because of the importance of promoting integrity and advancing excellence, but also because it gives me the opportunity to express my appreciation for the work you are doing among the CPAs in the Government Service.

By promoting integrity, pursuing excellence and steering its membership’s competency and professionalism to the highest standards in various sectors of the government, GACPA is performing a vital service to the government and Filipino people by being an ally in developing and sustaining the country’s economy, and ultimately,attaining a better quality of life for the Filipino people.¹

It has been noted that the Philippines has the most persistent poverty in Southeast Asia.But the Government is addressing the poverty problem and appears resolved to change the lives of the country’s poor.In fact, the President wants to

¹GACPA Mission and Vision.

transform the Philippines into an upper-middle- income country by the end of his term in 2022. In a six-year plan, he wants to spread the wealth in the Philippines.

The cornerstone of his vision is a plan referred to as 'Build, Build, Build'. And, the President has found other financing schemes through a major change in Philippine foreign policy, and they are likely to make all the difference.

Numerous studies have shown that where governance is poor, investments and economic growth suffer. Likewise, mounting evidence suggests that corruption undermines confidence of investors and adversely affects capital inflows and investments, which is an important source of economic growth.

On the other hand, studies also show that government integrity is the foundation of the social credit system. A government with integrity contributes to a good investment environment, which is essential for local economic development. To optimize the investment environment for private capital investment, our government is currently undergoing various reforms that all aim towards real change. It has focused on speeding up the transformation of government function and on improving the efficiency of government operations.

In an article of The Manila Times on July, 4, 2018, by Mr. Rigoberto Tiglao, he wrote that in the first 21 months in office of President Duterte, which is from July 2016 to March 2018, the foreign direct investments (FDI) totaled to \$16 billion US Dollars. According to Tiglao, these data are from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, specifically from the data base in its website. The quarterly data shows a robust, consistent growth pattern. And in our country's economic history this is an "off-the-charts" development. The author added that, whatever one's political color, as Filipinos, we should be happy over these investment flows, which is really an earth-shaking development. For the first time since the mid-1970s, there is a momentum in foreign direct investments flows.

As Tiglao worded it, we cannot underestimate the fact that such momentum in investment inflows marked the economic take-off of now-developed countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia. We hope that the momentum is maintained.

From the foregoing, it shows that investors have the confidence in the governance of the present administration and in the programs which strengthen government integrity. Therefore, it is important for policy makers to understand the economic consequences of government integrity in the current environment of ongoing reforms and the construction of the social credit system.

Considering that the Philippines is entering a period of rapid economic expansion; and is surging past the rest of Southeast Asia, integrity has become increasingly important in the social value system. Government integrity is the cornerstone and the soul of social integrity, and it plays a very important role in leading and promoting the construction of the social integrity system.

As GACPA members we play a vital role in strengthening government integrity as we are working individually in various government agencies nationwide. Now, is the right time to take part in this real change that the President has introduced. There are 10,000 members of GACPA working in the government service. This strength in numbers represents a formidable force to help effect change within our respective offices and ultimately in our country.

Hence, this 1-day Conference is just timely and appropriate to renew the vibrancy of our profession's contribution to national government and continue to strengthen our integrity and advance excellence as GACPA members.

INTEGRITY

On integrity.... it is a personal attribute. Personal integrity is an inborn moral conviction to do what is right, and reject that which is wrong, regardless of the consequences that are attached to their decisions. Integrity comes in many forms, but

the most important traits that are expected at the workplace are dependability, honesty, loyalty and good judgement. At times, you may reach a point where you are asked to do something that doesn't go in accordance with your personal code of conduct. This may present a challenging decision for you, but if you have strong integrity and values, you will refuse to do it. Having the courage to say no is an important skill to learn.

As an individual in the workplace, here are some simple tips to help you find your own **personal integrity culture** that can promote and inspire integrity in those you interact with;

- Your actions should be consistent with your words;
- You should be trustworthy, reliable and honest;
- You should communicate honestly and openly;
- You should have appropriate values, and behaviours that reflect these values;
and
- You must be able to admit mistakes and not be afraid to show you care.

Integrity is not just important on a personal level, it is also vitally important at a workplace level. Primarily, integrity in the workplace is important as these traits foster a positive workplace culture. Organisations known for their integrity perform better. As part of the government service, we should build a culture of integrity in the workplace. One where there is open communication, good decision making and a strong moral compass guiding all decisions and actions.

Please allow me to share with you some essential points for demonstrating integrity in the workplace:

- **Build Trusting and Respectful Relationships** – [Trust and respect are the ingredients of a healthy, positive workplace culture. Polite communication, respecting your

colleague's thoughts and ideas and continuously working on relationships demonstrates that you are a team player. Working as a team builds up trust and also shows that people can rely on you.]

- **Follow Company Policies** –As these policies are designed to guide you as to the best practices.
- **Demonstrate Responsible Behaviour** –[Ensure that there is no reason for your colleagues to ever question your conduct by demonstrating ethical and moral behaviour at all times. This includes avoiding using the company's equipment or resources for personal use, striving to complete your task before deadlines and showing enthusiasm and commitment to your work.]
- **Work Diligently** –[This is a very powerful way of demonstrating integrity as it shows that you are responsible for your work time. Making personal calls, surfing the internet, texting or snacking at the work desk, are some of the activities that distract one from working efficiently. Focusing on your job responsibilities while at your desk will show your colleagues, manager, and even customers, that you have strong work ethics.]
- **Admit to and Learn from Your Mistakes** –[It is common to make mistakes as you work, but you should admit the mistake without putting the blame on someone else. This shows that you are responsible enough to own up to your mistakes, are willing to correct them and learn from them. If you are a manager, this means taking the blame yourself, and not letting your team members take the responsibility.]
- **Lead by Example** –[This sets a firm foundation for what you value most and how you want to work. By seeing you working by the same standards and expectations, it encourages others to follow suit.]
- **Stand Up for Your Beliefs** –[This is about standing up for what you believe is the right way of doing things, even if everyone else is doing something different.]
- **Have Your Own Identity** –[Come to understand who you are, what you are capable of becoming, what you want out of life and where you want to go. Ensure that these are not merely reflections of what others expect or want. Once you know this, align your values to this path and steer straight in all that you do.]

EXCELLENCE

Going back to the theme of the conference, I want to reiterate that we should always strive for excellence. Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of commitment to excellence, as well as intelligent planning and focused effort. Moreover, I believe that commitment to excellence is not enough, it should always be, commitment to excellence with a purpose, in order to make a positive social impact.

As for me, excellence in our jobs as government accountants demands with it the practice of prudence and accountability. By having prudence and accountability in our minds, we would always think of what is good for our country, resulting to excellent output.

I want to leave with you an article in The Philippine Star on July 7, 2018, entitled, "Philippine Government saves P7.28 billion from ASEAN hosting budget". And in that article, for me, the most important part is when it narrates that:

x x x the Duterte administration saved much and did not splurge as ASEAN Summit host.

I was one of the officials of the ASEAN National Organizing Council (NOC) 2107, as Assistant Deputy Director General for Administration and Logistics/Finance, being the only CPA in the said NOC, not to mention that I have no experience at all how to handle such huge activities. The said ASEAN meetings were composed of 279 meetings with an P11 billion budget for the Office of the President. With all humility, and with the principles of Accountability and Value for Money in my mind, in the said activity we were able to save more or less P5 Billion, spending about P6 billion pesos only out of the budgeted P11 billion without sacrificing the quality of each meeting.

And believe it or not all my cash advances amounted only to less than P2 million, which I was able to liquidate. Well, I can enumerate to you on how I single-handedly and personally faced all the challenges relating to the financial aspects of

the said activities, and ultimately survived with huge savings, but I choose to leave all the rest of the story as history. However, it can be summarized thru a text message sent to me that says: “Congratulations Comm. Asec., your reasonable control of the purse, really paid off.”

This article may just be an ordinary report of the Philippine Star, but it made a huge impact on me and made me realized that on my own small ways, I can contribute something to society and ultimately to the country. It gives a feeling of fulfilment knowing that you are able to contribute to something bigger than yourself.

On that personal note, well this story I am telling you is not to brag about it, but somehow to inspire every member of GACPA that each one of us can contribute something and has his/her own roles in building this country, which we ought to serve. The Philippine economy is not just catching up, it is now the world's 10th fastest growing economy in the world as recorded in 2017.² And I also hope that the momentum is maintained.

In fact, the theme of the conference, ‘Promoting Integrity, Advancing Excellence’ is just suited and a restatement of what Dr. Jose Rizal once said and I quote, “On this battlefield, man has no better weapon than his intelligence, no other force but his heart.” In other words, in this journey of building a better Philippines, we should always sharpen our minds as we advance excellence, and promote integrity as we strengthen our character.

I wish everyone a very productive conference ahead of us.

Thank you very much and have a good day!

² Google.