



INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA SÉCURITÉ SOCIALE
ASOCIACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE LA SEGURIDAD SOCIAL
INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG FÜR SOZIALE SICHERHEIT

Regional Social Security Forum for Asia and the Pacific

Manila, Philippines, Friday 23 October 2009

Closing remarks of Ms. Corazon de la Paz-Bernardo

President of the ISSA

Distinguished participants of the first ISSA Regional Social Security Forum for Asia and the Pacific,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Colleagues and friends,

Good evening!

The time has come to say goodbye.

This is a goodbye of mixed feelings.

We are sad to say goodbye to new and old friends. As has been said before, “One dies a little every time he says goodbye to a friend”.

But we know that somehow, sometime, somewhere, we will see each other again.

We are happy to have been part of this Forum.

Happy to go back home where family and loved ones wait.

Happy to go back to work on Monday, to continue serving the social security needs of our members.

Indeed, as I look across the room this evening, I marvel once again at the incredible array of social security experts from various parts of the Asia and Pacific region who are around me.

It is for this reason that tonight, as we say goodbye, I am filled with confidence about the future of social security:

This is because in you, I am certain that your country’s social security programmes are in very capable hands.

When I retired as Chairman and Senior Partner from Pricewaterhouse Coopers in 2001, I was ready to spend a life of leisure and travel.

Up until that time, I scarcely gave any thought to social security, nor what it means for a country.

But when I assumed office as President and Chief Executive Officer of the SSS in 2001, social security, very quickly, made its indelible impression on me.

In a word: noble.

No one can overstate the nobility of purpose of social security.

The past eight years have given me a privileged view of the difference social security makes for those who are lucky to have it.

It means being able to cope with periods of joblessness, or of being sick and ill of health.

Of being disabled.

It means people having the money to bury their dead.

Or pay for the tuition of their children, or to rebuild homes that have been levelled by floods or earthquakes or tidal waves.

Or cope with retirement and old age, or to survive a spouse.

On a regional and global scale, we are muddling through a global financial, food and climate crises.

In my country, even as the Philippines struggles to recover from a devastating typhoon that buried lives and properties, we are bracing for more in the coming months until December.

Scarce funds that have been previously earmarked for development are now being diverted to meet the urgent need to rehabilitate lives and properties that have been destroyed by the typhoons.

But I would like to think that, as Charles Dickens would have put it, “We are in the worst of times, we are in the best of times”.

It is the best of times because it is when things are so bad that we are each given a chance to show our best to make things better.

I am reminded of a movie I saw sometime ago. It was entitled “A Beautiful Mind”.

It is the story of John Nash, one of the eminent economists of all times.

As many of you may know, Adam Smith, considered as the father of Modern Economics, coined the term “the invisible hand” to refer to the notion that, in perfect competition, the best result comes about when everyone in the group does what is best for himself.

And John Nash says, “No, Adam Smith is wrong. The best result comes about when everyone in the group does what is best for himself *and* the group.

The innocuous word “and” spells the difference.

What is best for everyone in the group *and* ourselves.

I believe that this nugget of wisdom of John Nash touches on the very essence of what is in the heart of every social security administrator.

That at the heart of every social security administrator is a beautiful mind.

A mind that allows you to encompass not just your self-interest but more importantly, the interest of others.

A beautiful mind that compels you to do the best, not just for yourself and your immediate family, but for the larger group, the larger family, the family that is our country, the family that is our region, the family that is our world.

A beautiful mind that continually discovers that the less we live for ourselves, the more are we able to live for others.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we bring this Forum to a close, let us all be grateful for the privilege, the honour, the opportunity to be of service to our fellowmen.

Maraming salamat at mabuhay tayong lahat.

As ISSA President, let me now thank the Philippine Social Security Association for hosting the first Regional Social Security Forum for Asia and the Pacific.

Atty. Winston Garcia, President and General Manager of the GSIS.

Dr. Rey Aquino, President and CEO of PhilHealth.

Secretray Romulo Neri, President and CEO of the SSS.

Mr. Jaime Fabiana, President and CEO of the Home Development Mutual Fund.

Ret. B/Gen. Jose Nano, President of the AFP-Retirement, Separation and Benefits System.

Ms. Evelyn Tablang, Executive Director of the Employees' Compensation Commission.

Mr. Sergio O. Valencia, Chairman of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office.

May I also thank the NOC Secretariat for giving so much of themselves to make sure that all the logistical arrangements for this Forum were in place.

Ms. May Catherine Ciriaco of the Social Security System.

Ms. Fe Dayco of the Government Service Insurance System.

Ms. Aurora Quilandrino of the Employees' Compensation Commission.

Mr. Jun Espana of the Home Development Mutual Fund.

Mr. Ed Gammad of the AFP-RSBS.

Mr. Jun Esguerra of PhilHealth.

Ms. Marissu Bugante of the SSS.

Atty. Lauro Patiag, Manager of the PCSO.

May I now call on Secretary Romulo Neri to receive on behalf of the Philippine Social Security Association a small token of ISSA's deep appreciation for hosting the Forum.

Thank you very much.