



**Asia-Pacific
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Session: Opening

Welcome Remarks by Executive Secretary, Office of the President, the Philippines

Submitted by: The Philippines



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**Symposium on APEC 2015 Priorities
Manila, Philippines
8 December 2014**

Welcome Remarks of Executive Secretary Paquito N. Ochoa Jr. at the APEC

[Delivered at the Grand Ballroom, Makati Shangri-La Hotel, Makati City, on December 8, 2014]

His and Her Excellencies, the members of the Diplomatic Corps, the Senior Officials and delegates of the APEC member economies; fellow officials and workers in government; representatives from the APEC Business Advisory Council and the private sector; and the APEC Regional Secretariat, a good morning to all of you, and welcome to the Philippines and the first leg of our country's hosting of the 2015 APEC.

Please allow me to begin by enjoining everyone to join our people in prayer, as our countrymen in the Visayas, parts of Mindanao, and the Bicol Region are now feeling the effects of Typhoon Ruby. Our thoughts and prayers go to them, and to the men and women who have been mobilized to ensure their safety.

It was with this typhoon in mind that we decided last week to move the venue of this Informal Senior Officials' Meeting from the province of Albay to Metro Manila. We would have preferred to hold this meeting in the shadows one of the country's most majestic sights, Mayon Volcano, but we believed it was more prudent for the local government of Albay—internationally recognized for its accomplishments in disaster risk reduction and management—to focus on the preventive actions they needed to undertake in the wake of the typhoon.

Nonetheless, we thank Albay's tireless governor, Governor Joey Salceda, as well as the local government officials of Legaspi City, for all the work they put in to prepare for the ISOM. I am sure that had you seen the city and what they had in store for you that you would have been very impressed. As they say in Bicol, *dios mabalos sa indo gabos*, or thank you very much.

Though there are dark skies overhead and the rest of the country, these stand in stark contrast to the bright prospects of APEC and its 21 member economies. This is due in part to the chairmanship of our previous host, the People's Republic of China. Under China's chairmanship, the APEC's strategic relevance in the region has been advanced, as embodied in the 2014 APEC Leaders' Declaration, and we shall strive to build on these gains in our hosting year.

It has been almost two decades since we last hosted the APEC in 1996. We have come a long way since, and this is something that we hope to display in the coming months as we hold the various APEC meetings leading to the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting in November 2015.

As President Benigno S. Aquino III announced last week, our theme for APEC 2015 is "Building Inclusive Economies, Building a Better World." This theme was chosen to orient this year's APEC toward making certain that the sustained growth of our economies will result in tangible benefits on the lives of all our peoples. We are confident that with our country's remarkable turnaround in recent years, our story and our experiences can certainly enrich the discussions on this subject.

The objective of this ISOM is to introduce the host priorities for 2015. These priorities are designed to ensure continuity of past and ongoing work; promote balance and relevance to each economy's domestic and regional needs; and ensure sustainability of efforts in achieving short, medium, and long-term goals.

We believe that these priorities will help lead towards a sustained, inclusive, and resilient growth in the Asia Pacific region, and we hope to obtain your support in advancing these strategic priorities.

In light of this, we encourage your active participation in the activities lined up for the next two days. To this end, excellent speakers and notable moderators have been invited to foster dynamic exchanges and solicit innovative ideas from all of you.

In 2015, the Philippines sees APEC deepening its role as a cornerstone for regional dialogue, cutting-edge innovation, and constructive engagement. We envision dynamic APEC economies that will embrace all sectors and stakeholders within their people-centered economic agenda. We also envision a progressive region, both within and across economies, that collectively works together towards our common goals of shared prosperity and inclusive growth for all.

The APEC, of course, is not all about work and serious discussions. We believe this is a great venue to build friendships and encourage camaraderie among individuals who play significant roles in their respective economies.

We also encourage you to take advantage of our hosting year to enjoy what our country has to offer. We hope to bring you to some of our splendid beaches and to show you some of our magnificent vistas during the succeeding meetings. But more importantly, we hope you will bear witness to our greatest resource: our people, who are kind, hospitable, compassionate, and talented beyond measure.

In ending, we wish you a fruitful, productive ISOM, and an enjoyable stay in Metro Manila and the rest of the country.

Thank you very much, and a good day to you all.