

20 February 2006

Thanksgiving Lunch hosted by President Arroyo at Malacañan Palace

Director General Adrian S. Cristobal Jr.
Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IP Philippines)

A strong IP system is indispensable in a knowledge-based economy, where intangible assets are becoming more valuable than tangible assets like factories and land. Firms like IMB and Microsoft earn billions of dollars a year just on their intellectual property assets, which constitute about 2/3 of their total assets.

A viable IP system is also a powerful incentive for invention and innovation that will enable our country to develop the technological advantage to compete globally. Our country's positioning, for instance, as an ICT hub in this region requires a strong IP system.

Intellectual property, thus cuts across almost all sectors of our economy from music to software, from furniture designs to medicines.

These are the intangible wealth of our nation that the IP system aims to protect and promote for our own benefit.

And the Intellectual Property Office (IP Philippines), while continuing its role as regulator and inter-agency coordinator, shall pursue its mission to help develop the country's IP assets.

Like Japan, Singapore and a few ASEAN countries, we are formulating a National IP Policy and Strategy in consultation with the private sector, academe, and government to guide us in the next several years. With the President's support we hope to mainstream this National IP Policy and Strategy in the government's development programs.

Enforcement operations will continue relentlessly and we hope to see permanent IP units in each agency with proper budgetary and staff support. The BOC's rationalization plan, for instance, includes such a unit with staff and budget. The DTI field offices will also strengthen the campaign through active monitoring of fake products.

Vigorously implement a public awareness and education campaign with the help of the government's media and information agencies, DepEd, and the private sector. Enforcement and convictions alone will not solve the problem of piracy; it must be complemented by an educated consumer.

Prosecution and conviction will be the inter-agency's focus with the new IP Prosecutor's unit in the DOJ central office and the designated IP prosecutors nationwide.

We will continue working closely with the Supreme Court and the Philippine Judicial Academy for the specialized IP training and support for judges and court personnel. Hopefully, we can convince the Court or perhaps Congress, to create two or three Special IP and International Trade Courts similar to Thailand's so we can move the cases faster.

Madame President, thank you again for this honor. You have boosted our morale tremendously. With your full support, we should get out totally from the watch list UNDER YOUR WATCH.