



CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICERS FORUM INC. (CIOF)
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP ASSEMBLY MEETING:
“RECOGNIZING E-GOVERNMENT PROGRESS IN THE PHILIPPINES”
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Keynote Address

SECRETARY RAY ANTHONY ROXAS-CHUA III

Chairman, Commission on Information and Communications Technology

CICT Commissioner Tim Diaz de Rivera, officers and members of the Chief Information Officers Forum, led by its President, BIR Deputy Commissioner Lilia Guillermo, fellow government workers, ladies and gentlemen, a pleasant good morning to you all.

It is a privilege to have been invited to this General Membership Assembly Meeting of the CIO Forum. As the new Chairman of the Commission on Information and Communications Technology, or CICT, I see this event as a great opportunity to get more acquainted with fellow ICT advocates and share experiences with you. I believe that everyone present here shares the same commitment of promoting and sustaining ICT as a powerful instrument for effective governance and continuous national development.

Today’s theme, *“Recognizing eGovernment Progress in the Philippines,”* is embedded in the CICT’s mandate and vision. As stipulated in Executive Order 269, the CICT shall be the lead agency in the government’s efforts to make the Philippines an e-enabled society by making ICT central to nation-building and national competitiveness. Likewise, the CICT envisions a Philippines with affordable and reliable ICT connectivity; an ICT-enabled business environment that boosts the economy, an ICT-competent human resource, and a responsive, technology-savvy government delivering services efficiently and transparently.

Through our Cyberservices Group, the CICT is focused on establishing the Philippines as a premier destination for offshoring and outsourcing, or O&O, companies. The Cyber Corridor is a virtual channel stretching from Baguio to Davao, housing numerous O&O providers in various fields such as contact centers, business process outsourcing, software development, animation, engineering design, medical and legal transcription, and video game development. Through our Human Capital Development Group, the CICT helps ensure the availability of ICT-competent manpower by implementing certification programs, such as the National ICT Competency Standards Test and the International Computer Driving License, as well as promoting computer literacy in high school students through our iSchools and eSkwela projects. Finally, through our E-Government Development Group, the CICT encourages the use of ICT in government agencies to provide a transparent and citizen-centric public service where people can readily access government information and services. The latter is what I would like to focus on today.

The government recognizes the benefits of ICT in enhancing the efficiency and credibility of public service. As a result, the e-Government Fund was created by the Department of Budget and Management to serve as the primary resource for the CICT to design citizen-centric ICT applications through a multi-agency approach within the government. The CICT is tasked to lead the review, assessment, selection, and monitoring of mission-critical, cross-agency frontline ICT projects in government that will be financed by the e-Government Fund.

The e-Government Fund has financed some very prominent projects such as the BIR Integrated Computerization, which includes an electronic filing and payment system, and a data warehouse. Another project of note is the Bureau of Customs Automated System for Customs Data, or ASYCUDA World, which aims to improve the collection of lawful revenues and reduce the transaction costs from importations. Yet another project is the DTI Business Registry, which provides a seamless transactional environment for business registration and facilitation.

An e-Government project in the pipeline is the e-Government Portal, which will enable easier access to government services by presenting all government services and information in user-

friendly categories such as Employment, Education, Health, and Social Services, rather than by agency or department. The e-Government Portal is comprised of two major system components namely e-PinoySerbisyo, an e-services portal, and e-Bayad, an e-payment gateway facility.

One of our projects was even highlighted by Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. In her July 2007 SONA, President Arroyo stated that information technology will help the BIR to bring in more taxes through its Revenue Watch Dashboard that will monitor real time revenue collections from the national level down to its examiners. I am pleased to note that the prototype for the dashboard was already launched in August 2007. The BIR is now preparing the Terms of Reference for the procurement of the project's systems requirements and specifications and data gathering.

One project that I would like to mention, even though it is not financed by the e-Government Fund, is the Automation of the May 2010 Elections. As Chairman of the CICT, I am appointed by Republic Act 9369 to be the Chairman of the COMELEC Advisory Council, which is mandated to recommend the most appropriate, secure, applicable and cost-effective technology to be applied in the automation of the May 2010 Elections. The Advisory Council, of which your President, BIR Deputy Commissioner Lilia Guillermo, is also a member, is very committed to fulfilling its mandate.

To guide government agencies in the computerization of their vital operations and key frontline services, the CICT strongly encourages each government agency to develop an Information Systems Strategic Plan, or ISSP. The CICT is responsible for the thorough review, evaluation and monitoring of submitted ISSPs, and their endorsement to DBM for appropriate funding. To date, 510 individuals from 332 local government units, or LGUs, have been trained on the ISSP; 299 ISSPs have been reviewed and evaluated; and 162 have been endorsed to DBM.

All these initiatives are governed by the Government Information Systems Plan, or GISP. Synchronized with the government's Ten-Point Agenda and Medium Term Philippine

Development Plan 2004-2010, the GISP aims to develop and enhance all frontline government services systems, oversight and common application systems, sector-specific and LGU-specific information systems, and other mission-critical systems to ensure citizen-centric and transactional service delivery.

Another initiative that the CICT is currently pushing for is the creation of the CIO Council, which will consist of CIOs from every agency of government. The CIO Council will work together to maximize the use and efficiency of government's ICT resources, and ensure better monitoring of the use of ICT to implement government's programs and priorities. While this initiative is still in progress, I am thankful for the existence of the CIO Forum and I commend you for working on the same goals.

While the e-government initiatives of national government agencies are more prominent, the Philippine government and the CICT both believe that the success of e-government in the country has to start from the smallest unit of government in order for a greater number of people to reap its benefits. Thus, the CICT continuously implements, along with the National Computer Center, one of its most crucial strategic projects, the e-Governance in Local Government Units, or eLGU, project. The eLGU Project is the LGUs' gateway into full ICT utilization by steering them in the computerization of priority systems, development of web presence, and administration of LGU capability building. I am pleased to note that as of August 2007, 1,685 representing 99% of LGUs have web presence.

Through the Community eCenter, or CeC, component of the eLGU project, the Philippines demonstrates its compliance with the World Summit on the Information Society's priority agenda of building "*a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society.*" The CeCs serve as access points to help coordinate efforts to connect municipalities around the country by 2010. Currently, 110 LGUs have been identified as CeC pilots; 107 have been deployed with equipment; 106 done with Orientation/Participatory Rapid Field Appraisal; and 106 have undergone Strategic Business Planning seminar workshop.

As Chairman of the CICT, I am also proud to share with you that our e-government efforts earned affirmation worldwide. The United Nations e-Government Readiness Survey which assesses more than 50,000 features of the e-government websites of 191 UN member-states to ascertain how ready the Governments around the world are in employing the opportunities offered by ICT, gave the Philippines the 47th spot in 2004 and the 41st spot in 2005. In the 2005 Web Measure Index Ranking which assesses the websites of the governments to determine if they are employing e-government to the fullest, the country garnered the 17th place out of 179 nations. Another reason to be proud of is the determination of our government agencies to optimize the use of ICT in their operations. To date, 92.8% of national government agencies have their own websites; 142 have online services with 10 having online payment services; and 49 have some form of SMS-backed services. To top it all, our own www.gov.ph merited the 2005 UN e-Government Readiness Survey's commendation as *"at par with the best in the world and could be considered a good practice,"* so if you still have not checked it out, please do so.

Despite all the strategies and accomplishments mentioned above, we still face a long road ahead. We need to continue working on reforms and laws that would protect our efforts and ensure their full implementation. In line with this, the CICT is collaborating with the Council of Europe, the ICT Committee of the House of Representatives, other government agencies, industry players and the civil society in pushing for the passage of the Anti-Cybercrime Bill. This law enumerates the various forms of cyber crimes and their corresponding punishments. It is our fervent hope that this law would be a potent tool in neutralizing threats to our ICT infrastructure, and ultimately in upholding the role of ICT in national development. Also, as much as the CICT wants to lead the implementation of the nation's ICT agenda, we see the need to have a more definite mandate. We, therefore, ask for support as we pursue the creation of the Department of ICT, which will be the primary government entity responsible for the coordination and implementation of the national ICT agenda.

In closing, I would like to appeal to all the CIOs in this forum to continue their advocacy on ICT not only by supporting the CICT's e-government initiatives but also by encouraging the efficient and transparent use of ICTs in their own organizations.

Thank you and good day!