



Office of the President of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

6TH MINDANAO ICT CONGRESS AND 1ST BIMP-EAGA ICT CONFERENCE
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Keynote Address
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Distinguished delegates from the BIMP-EAGA countries, leaders from ICT and BPO firms, representatives from partner ICT councils, non-government organizations, fellow government workers, ladies and gentlemen, Good Morning!

I am honored to have been invited to deliver the Keynote Address for the **6th Mindanao ICT Congress and 1st BIMP-EAGA ICT Conference**. As you know, this is only my fourth week in office and my first official trip outside Metro Manila.

This is the sixth time that this notable event brings us in government together, alongside ICT companies and service providers, ICT councils, NGOs and civil society, and academic institutions into one venue, to share our ICT experiences, align our efforts and solidify our relationships as ICT champions. This year marks my first participation in this event as a government official and Chairman of the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT). I am particularly honored that my first year in the Mindanao ICT Congress offers a global dimension to my experience, with the strong participation of our distinguished friends from the BIMP-EAGA countries on the occasion of the 1st BIMP-EAGA ICT Conference.

This year's theme, "ICT Beyond Borders," captures the essence of ICTs as prime movers of international commerce, and intermingling of cultures, both of which have become the norms in our global society. Today, nations all over the world realize that information and communications technologies (ICTs) generate new opportunities, help promote seamless technological as well as cultural bridges, as

well as enhance efficiency in the conduct of global commerce. Consequently, national boundaries are no longer as clearly defined, because ICTs enable the immediate exchange of information, knowledge, technology and human resources across nations and continents, transforming our business as well as cultural paradigms.

The Philippines recognizes this global movement as evidenced by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's emphasis on building transportation networks and digital infrastructure, and developing the Philippine Cyber Corridor from Baguio City to Davao City as premier destinations for offshoring and outsourcing. The Philippines has also developed Subic and Clark economic zones into top-notch international service and logistics centers servicing not only the country but the whole Asia-Pacific region.

From the time it was created in 2004, the Commission on ICT continues to plan, coordinate and harmonize government's ICT initiatives, and to develop programs to keep abreast of increasing globalization wherein lifestyles, social interaction, and economic transactions now occur beyond the limitations of time and geographical locations.

Through the Philippine ICT Roadmap, the country's blueprint for ICT development and developed in 2006 in cooperation with various ICT public and private stakeholders, the CICT hopes to transform the country into an ICT-enabled community, characterized by efficient, inclusive, and transparent governance, flourishing ICT investments, a world class workforce, and a globally competent business and ICT infrastructure.

Such a Roadmap is supported by a government that recognizes achievement of national goals that requires regional and global cooperation. The CICT thus continues to be an active participant in global dialogue on best practices, to secure its place in the increasingly competitive ICT market. The CICT is committed to maintaining strong partnerships with international bodies such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Community (APEC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), United Nations agencies, and many others, in the furtherance of its ICT initiatives. On the part of the BIMP-EAGA, however, we are pleased to note that there have been discussions to form an ICT Committee which we hope will harness even further ICT directions among the countries in the East ASEAN region.

Allow me now, to share with you my vision for the CICT, as well as some of the major initiatives that the agency is currently supporting.

The integration of ICT in education is an ideal start. We, at the CICT, believe that a well-educated and ICT-certified workforce is a valuable asset to national progress because a highly-skilled workforce capably delivers new ideas, innovative products and quality performance. Hence, our Human Capital Development Group (HCDG) conceptualizes, coordinates and facilitates programs and projects that would address the current ICT skills gap and develop Filipino ICT expertise, thereby elevating the global competitiveness of the Philippine ICT workforce. The National ICT Competency Standards test (NICS) which assesses an individual's ICT-related knowledge and skills, and the agency's Content Development projects are implemented nationwide. Also, two of the CICT's flagship projects--the eSkwela and iSchools Projects, are ICT-mainstreaming projects that have been highly successful so far.

The eSkwela is an initiative that puts up Community eLearning Centers for the out-of-school youth (OSY) and gives them the opportunity to reap the benefits of an ICT-enhanced alternative education. In Mindanao, an eSkwela has been set up in Cagayan de Oro this year through the APEC Education Foundation Grant. The CICT will also be overseeing the rollout of regional road shows in the third week of November 2007 to raise awareness of the eSkwela project and encourage local partners and communities to establish their own eSkwela centers. I do therefore take this opportunity to enjoin Mindanao stakeholders and champions, particularly from NGOs, academe, civil society, internet café associations, social/outreach networks and others, to participate in the road shows. The CICT welcomes any form of coordination and support for this activity. Moreover, regional trainers' training is also an integral part of the eSkwela project.

The Internet in Schools (iSchools) Project is a CICT initiative that aims to provide public high school teachers and students with broadband internet connectivity to enable access to relevant digital content and applications. To date there are 7 schools in Mindanao that had undergone community mobilization and training. Our iSchool efforts in this region continue to be fruitful, owing to the active support extended by our partner academic institutions.

A second priority area of the CICT is the coordination and implementation of ICTs in governance. The CICT's e-Government Development Group is mandated to oversee this important initiative. It aims to implement ICT plans and measures of national government agencies (NGAs) and local government units (LGUs) that would facilitate better, more efficient and more transparent government service. I am pleased to note that there are now 476 local government units in Mindanao that are now online.

Another flagship program of the CICT is the Community eCenter (CeC) Program, which aims to coordinate efforts to connect municipalities around the country by 2010. As the Philippines is a signatory to the World Summit on the

Information Society, a priority agenda of the United Nations and the International Telecommunication Union, we need to ensure that we remain committed to building “a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life.” Our CeC Program was conceptualized for this purpose.

To date, a total of 114 CeCs have been established in Mindanao. Through the eLGU Project, local government units are provided tools capable of delivering frontline government services through the deployment of ICTs in their operations. The Project involves deployment of equipment, as well as provision of social preparation and business planning sessions. Likewise, CICT equips Mindanaoans with ICT knowledge by facilitating e-governance courses on Information Systems Planning; eGovernance Project Management Course; and Managing ICT Services – Government IT Infrastructure Library Framework.

A third priority area is the sustained development of the Philippines’ Cyber Corridor. The Cyber Corridor hosts offshoring and outsourcing providers, technology hubs and learning centers across the country from Luzon to Mindanao. As of 2006, 238,000 jobs have been provided to Filipinos around the country and some US\$3.6 billion to the nation’s revenues. Mindanao is an important region in the Cyber Corridor with its skilled human resource and an attractive environment for investment. In line with this, the CICT’s Cyberservices Group continues to cooperate with Mindanao ICT players and government officials on their scorecarding exercises to determine a city’s readiness for ICT investment. The Cyberservices Group with the help of DTI Regional offices in Mindanao, has conducted Scorecard Workshops for CARAGA in Butuan City, for Region 10 in Cagayan de Oro City, Region 11 in Davao City, Region 9 in Zamboanga City and Region 12 in Gen. Santos City. ICT Cluster Plans are already in place in these regions. In September 2007, a Briefing on the Cyber Corridor was conducted in Davao City, which 1) apprised the Mindanao ICT champions about the Cyber Corridor, 2) gave updates on Mindanao LGUs’ current standing in terms of ICT-readiness to host an investor, as well as 3) disseminated information on the human resource skills gaps in relation to the requirements of the ICT industry.

Finally, and I argue this amidst some criticism, the CICT believes that an enabling legal, policy, and institutional body to develop, promote, coordinate and advance ICTs is needed towards the achievement of our national development goals. While the CICT was created as a transitory body, transforming this into a Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) will ensure an effective coordination and implementation of the national ICT agenda. We are heartened by the support from Congress and the Senate of the Philippines with the filing of House Bills on the creation of such Department. We look forward to further dialoguing with partner agencies in government, the private sector, civil society, the

academe and other concerned stakeholders, as well as informing our legislators on the importance of establishing a DICT.

In closing, may I reiterate that the CICT unwaveringly supports and will actively participate in the realization of Mindanao's ICT agenda, as this region is considered an important growth area for the country. We at CICT remain hopeful that the strength and energies of ICT will be harnessed to realized our goals of a people-centered and development-oriented society – one that promotes sustainable development and improved the quality of life for our citizens. These we will fulfill by establishing an environment that will build, enhance and sustain a digital community that will create jobs, strengthen governance, and improve education and the quality of our human capital.

On behalf of the Commission on Information and Communications Technology, I wish everyone a fruitful and enjoyable MICT 2007 Congress and BIMP-EAGA ICT Conference.

Thank you and good day.