

Ombudsman Conchita Morales, Ambassador Joachim Heidorn, Ambassador Ivo Sieber, international development partners, ladies and gentlemen . . .

Good morning!

On behalf of the Hills Program on Governance at the Asian Institute of Management, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you and to thank you for coming to this forum on “Corruption and Development: How Anti-Corruption Can Be Integrated into Development Measures to Ensure Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth.”

We are honored to be hosting this conference in partnership with the Office of the Ombudsman and GIZ as part of the 25th Anniversary celebration of the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Hills Program was set up at AIM in 10 years ago to address governance issues at the intersection of the public and private sectors. We operate on the premise that corruption is a major impediment to development. It creates an uneven playing field, distorts the free market economy, brings down the quality of products and services, and discourages both domestic and foreign investments.

The Aquino administration deserves a lot of credit for making anti-corruption a top priority, and already it is making much progress as reflected in both local and international surveys. But much work remains to be done. To keep up the momentum, the administration needs the support of not only the citizenry but also international development partners. We all need to work together to develop systems that will reduce opportunities for corruption in both the public and private sectors.

We have an exciting line up of speakers who will share their insights and different perspectives -- from government, the business community, civil society, academia and international development partners. We hope that this conference will be the start an ongoing dialogue that will lead to tangible actions for ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth in this country.

I would now like to invite Dr. Joachim Heidorn, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Philippines, to say a few words of welcome.