

## **Welcome Address**

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(Acknowledgements...)

*Magandang umaga!* A pleasant morning to all.

Today marks a momentous occasion as Manila hosts the 41st ASEAN Social Security Association meetings—a privilege that returns to our shores once every twelve years. As I stand before you representing the Philippine Social Security Association, I am deeply mindful of our collective mandate: to safeguard and advance the social security systems that millions of our citizens depend upon.

In this era of rapid transformation, we gather under a theme that captures both our challenges and our aspirations: "Navigating the Future of Social Security: Integration, Innovation, and Inclusion." These three pillars form not just our conference theme, but our roadmap toward a more resilient and responsive social security framework for ASEAN.

**Integration** stands as our cornerstone principle. In our interconnected region, the ripples of change—whether economic shifts or demographic transitions—know no borders. By weaving together our diverse experiences and strategies, we forge solutions that strengthen not just individual nations, but our entire ASEAN community. With USD 1.3 trillion in collective assets under our stewardship, our unified approach carries the power to shape markets, influence sustainable practices, and create lasting positive impact across our economies.

**Innovation** serves as our catalyst for transformation. The digital revolution before us is not merely changing how we operate—it is fundamentally revolutionizing how we serve our beneficiaries. From artificial intelligence to blockchain technology, we must embrace these tools not as mere technical upgrades, but as bridges to better service delivery. In a world where technology reshapes societies daily, our social security systems must evolve while remaining accessible and reliable.

**Inclusion** remains our unwavering promise. As we navigate these transformative changes, we must ensure that our progress reaches every corner of our societies—from bustling metropolises to remote villages, from digital natives to our cherished elderly. Our mission extends beyond maintaining existing safety nets; we must weave stronger, more comprehensive systems that protect and empower all our citizens.

To every delegate present today: your voice is instrumental in this dialogue. Your experiences, insights, and your concerns will help shape policies that impact millions of lives across our region. I urge you to engage fully in our discussions, challenge assumptions, and share your unique perspectives over these next two days.

And while we address these crucial matters, I invite you to experience the warmth of Filipino hospitality. Manila opens its arms to you—may you find moments between our sessions to discover why we proudly call this city the Pearl of the Orient.

Let us make every moment of this conference count. Together, we can build social security systems that not only protect our people but empower them to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

Thank you, and Mabuhay!