Necessary Steps Moving Forward:

Statement on Massive Corruption!

We, the **Commission on the Social Apostolate of the Philippine Jesuits** join our voices with the whole country in condemning the large-scale, systemic corruption that is destroying our beloved nation.

We are outraged by the widespread, rapacious, and untrammeled pillaging of the country's coffers. The figures are staggering. In 2024, the World Bank, ADB, and the IMF estimated that 20% of government budget goes to corruption; that is easily P2 trillion wasted yearly! Zeroing in on flood control funds, Senator Panfilo Lacson has revealed that for the last decade, **out of the P2 trillion allotted to such measures, half or P1 trillion was funneled to the pockets of private companies in cahoots with DPWH officials and politicians** from the barangay up to our "honorable" members of Congress. This then explains the sub-standard or non-existing ("ghost") infrastructure projects that have rendered the country, especially the poor, vulnerable to rains and floods.

"Corruption kills," warns a 2023 IMF report on the link between corruption and disasters. For his part, **Pope Francis told us, "corruption is paid by the poor."** Indeed, the worsening floods in the country have claimed lives, destroyed livelihoods, and displaced millions. Experts inform us that things will continue to worsen unless efforts are made toward good governance.

We therefore demand the following urgent measures. First, **we ask the government to conduct a thorough investigation of all anomalous government infrastructure projects. We support an independent commission to do this**, given that both Houses of Congress are also at fault through the so-called budget-insertions and the mere fact that many of them are either involved in construction business themselves or have accepted campaign contributions from construction companies.

Congress simply cannot investigate itself. No one is above the law including the lawmakers. Morever, investigations should not stop at flood control infrastructures; this is an opportune time to clean up government, and thus, all the other departments must be looked into including those which have had bad reputations such as the Bureau of Customs and the Department of Education.

We must not forget as well the investigations into the use of the controversial and amorphous so-called Confidential Funds which have become executive pork in the last decade.

Second, if Congress is sincere in its involvement in the ongoing soul-searching, it must enact the necessary laws to plug the many holes and leaks in government. Firstly, it is obvious that families and the intricate mixed-up of their political and financial interests are at the root of the problem. **We therefore call on Congress again to enact the anti-political dynasty provision of the 1987 constitution.**

Secondly, it also appears that many sectoral representatives, who are supposed to be representing marginal sectors, are billionaire owners of construction companies implicated in the current mess. **It is high time that the law on the party-list representation be revisited and corrected.**

Thirdly, legal measures are needed to infuse greater transparency in government. **The Freedom of Information Act must be passed, including a complementing Whistleblowers Act. In connection with this, all public officials must automatically submit and make public their SALN.** Finally, as already suggested by many sectors, the **deliberations of Congress' bicameral committee**, which is responsible for the nefarious and clandestine budget insertions that paved the way for the anomalous DPWH projects, **should be made open and transparent to the public**; civil society must also be given representation in this all too-powerful bicameral committee.

The above measures are just the immediate steps needed for greater transparency and accountability in government. For our part, as part of civil society, we commit to closely and relentlessly monitor this corruption issue. **We call on fellow Filipinos to demand accountability from their representatives in Congress** and from their local authorities, writing or calling them if necessary.

All hands on deck as it were. Let us subject them to the highest moral standard of public service, checking on their lifestyles and that of their families. Finally, knowing that corruption has become systemic, **we urge the Church, the Schools and the Family**—our eminent cultural institutions—**to find ways to re-discover and instill among the young the ethical values of humility, honesty, integrity, hard work, genuine service, and authentic love of country.**

Corruption has become deep and wide in our society. For the future of our country and our youth, we must courageously deal with it now. It may be a long road ahead but delaying this journey of cleansing will only deepen the roots of evil and bring more suffering to our people.

Signed:

Commission on the Social Apostolate of the Philippine Jesuits

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