

Roundtable Discussion on The Idea of Cityhood and Local Governance Reform *Rembrandt Hotel – Tomas Morato, Quezon City | 24 February 2011*

In line with the 25th anniversary of the EDSA People Power and the recent flip – flopping decision of the Supreme Court on the question of the cityhood of the 16 new cities, the Local Government Development Foundation held a roundtable discussion last 24 February 2011 at the Rembrandt Hotel in Tomas Morato, Quezon City.

Gathering more than 100 local governance stakeholders – including members of the media, civil society, academe and associations of local authorities, LOGODEF Executive Director Prof. Edmund S. Tayao led the discussion of the crucial issue of re-examining the much needed policy reforms in local governance as it affects significantly the interpretation of the law and the overarching goal of socio-economic development.

In his presentation entitled, “Is the Local Government Code Still Valid?,” he stated that in spite of the provision that the Code should be reviewed five years after its enactment, there is yet any comprehensive assessment and or ratification actualized 20 years since its passage. This failure had led to the inability of the Code to adapt to the changes and needs of the time.

On the Issue of the 16 New Cities

Tayao stated that local governance stakeholders are caught surprise by the flip – flopping decision of the Supreme Court for the 3rd time since it had already ruled in finality in favor of the League of Cities of the Philippines, denying the 16 municipalities of their cityhood. The basis, according to the Supreme Court, is the inability to comply with the standard set by Republic Act 9009 in the conversion of municipalities to cities, which are as follows:

- a. 100 million locally generated income
- b. 100 sq. km land area
- c. 150,000 population

However, on 15 February 2011, it declared the creation of the 16 new cities constitutional.

Dr. Alvin Ang, director of the University of Santo Tomas Social Research Center, said that with the new SC ruling, the 16 new cities are now entitled to receive higher IRA therefore, be able to provide better public service delivery. He, however, also pointed out that other cities would suffer income loss because the 16 new cities have yet to reach the 100 million pesos locally generated income requirement. This would then yield to “imbalances and points of contention” best avoided now.

Reactor Dr. Alex Brillantes, Jr, former dean of the National College of Public Administration and Governance – University of the Philippines, also supported the need to stick to the criteria and popularize issues of local governance. He said that

TIMELINE	
Supreme Court Ruling on 16 Cities	
18 Nov 2008.	SC en banc declared cityhood unconstitutional
31 March 2009	Denied motion for reconsideration filed by the 16 cities through a resolution.
8 December 2009	SC en banc declared cityhood constitutional
24 August 2010	SC en banc reinstated its decision last 18 November
15 February 2011	SC granted motion for reconsideration filed by the 16 cities and ruled the cityhood laws constitutional

The League of Cities of the Philippines, through its Secretary – General Mayor Hernani Braganza of Alaminos, stated that the League will welcome additional members as long as they complied with the requirements of the law.
