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RURAL
ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVES
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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

11 November 2021

Power actors convene to discuss problems and identify solutions in the energy sector

In an effort to identify solutions to problems and challenges facing the energy sector, a group of power actors virtually convened yesterday, 10 November 2021, in a press conference with the media and other stakeholders.

With the theme “Role of Electric Cooperatives and other Players in Addressing Challenges in the Energy Sector”, the three-hour conference was spearheaded by PHILRECA, the association of 121 electric cooperatives, and participated in by resource guests from the House of Representatives, electric cooperatives, and leaders and advocates from the sector.

Opening up the press conference with an introduction on the issue, Atty. Janeene Depay-Colingan said that there are indeed some cooperatives who have had their own share of challenges and problems in their operations, “but we have to understand that there are other concerns that fall outside the ambit of control and power of any distribution utility – be it a private distribution utility or like our members, electric cooperatives.”

Atty. Colingan added that any “electric cooperative, as a distribution utility, can and will distribute electricity to the consumers, but in the absence of government support to augment generation capacity by inviting investors, which is beyond the control of distribution utilities like electric cooperatives, the public will eventually be affected.”

The so-called Power Bloc Representatives also discussed prevailing issues from the government sector.

Rep. Presley C. De Jesus of PHILRECA Party-List underscored the need for the Department of Energy to revisit its policy on CSP or Competitive Selection Process.

“There has been a review, but the agency needs to listen to the electric cooperatives on their problems and ensure to simplify the processes in order to prevent further delays,” said De Jesus.

He added that in the case of ERC, it needs to “augment its technical manpower in order to effectively perform its function” and “fast-track the approval of CAPEX and PSA applications.”

Meanwhile, Rep. Sergio C. Dagooc of APEC Party-List flagged the National Electrification Administration for its actions that are “unhelpful and detrimental to the welfare of the Electric Cooperatives and the member-consumer-owners.”

“Instead of resolving issues, NEA is creating them. This is not what NEA was mandated to do,” Dagooc commented on NEA’s continued attempts to intrude into EC’s operations, i.e., hiring and selection of BENECO’s General Manager.

Dagooc also said that ECs are facing a lot of threats and challenges on their franchises and yet, it seems that NEA is not doing anything to help and protect the ECs on this.

Rep. Godofredo N. Guya of RECOBODA Party-List however, called on NGCP, TransCo, and NPC to immediately address pressing issues, including electricity price spikes, unreliable power supply, frequent line congestions, and voltage fluctuations.

In SPUG areas, Guya said that “many interruptions, in fact, are also attributable to the outages of the power suppliers, which are the NPC and some GenCos.” He also urged “the NGCP to improve their services, rehabilitate and update their transmission lines, and expedite the repair of the submarine cables in Iloilo.”

Other leaders and advocates in the EC Sector also attended the conference.

Mr. Edgardo Rama Masongsong, former Administrator of the National Electrification Administration and an advocate of sustainable rural development and nation building, said that the “government should realize and recognize the

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relevance of the ECs in realizing development in the countryside for the last 52 years.”

In relation to Pres. Duterte’s threat to expropriate PALECO, Masongsong said that ECs “cannot just be eased out, expropriated, and given to the private capital through pronouncements and or declarations, orders, if not whims and caprice of people in government who are supposed to protect and promote the rights and interests of its citizenry”.

He further said though that he cannot “blame the President of his incorrect pronouncement as he is misinformed and therefore ill-advised by people surrounding him who are anti-ECs, anti-People and maybe pro-Oligarchs.”

Leaders and advocates from the sector – Mr. Allan L. Laniba, President of NAGMEC; Atty. Gloria C. Corrales, President of PHABDREC; and Mr. Reynaldo V. Villanueva, Chairman of NCECCO – expressed their support and commitment to challenged ECs, saying electric cooperatives have been agents of economic development for decades.

Laniba emphasized that “without electric cooperatives, medical missions, educational activities, construction, and other economic and commercial activities will not flourish or not exist in the first place in the countryside.”

Representatives of electric cooperatives who are in one way or another experiencing threats and challenges on their franchises and operations – Mr. Jeffrey Tan-Endriga, Chairman of PALECO; Engr. Jose Redmond S. Roquios, President of Electric Cooperatives Association of Region VI or ECAR VI; Ms. Marilou Impuesto, ISD Manager of NORDECO; Atty. Danny L. Pondevilla, General Manager of NONECO and PS/AGM of CENECO; and Atty. Delmar O. Cariño, ISD Manager of BENECON – focused on lingering issues and concerns that their electric cooperative is still facing.

With all questions and clarifications from media visitors and consumers alike answered by resource guests, the press conference was ended with the hope that all segments of the supply chain will be able to “pitch in” their own contributions to resolve any existing and potential energy concerns in the sector. ###

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