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PHILIPPINE CONSULATE GENERAL
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CSU'S 2020 GLOBAL ACCESS PROGRAM SPOTLIGHTS THE PHL



Consul General Adelio Angelito S. Cruz delivering his welcome message during the 2nd installment of the 2020 GAP.

14 October 2020, Los Angeles – The 2020 Global Access Program (GAP), an annual joint project of the California State University, San Bernardino and the United States Small Business Administration sustained keen interest on the Philippines for the second year in a row, together with Singapore and South Korea.

The second instalment of this year's GAP dubbed, “2020-21 Virtual Business Matchmaking and Education Series” featured the country's fashion, beauty and retail industries and was held virtually on 08 October 2020 via Zoom. Dr. Sarita Jackson, President and CEO of the Global Research Institute of International Trade (GRIIT), moderated the power webinar, featuring Philippine brands, Pili Ani, GREAT Women and Cocoveda.

In his welcome remarks, Consul General Adelio Angelito S. Cruz underlined the country's growth projections, 6.5% to 7.5% by 2021 through 2022, and shared positive stories of resilience shown by Philippine industries including in fashion, beauty and retail.

He also highlighted interventions made by the Philippine Government for to mitigate negative pandemic impacts on business, particularly the *Bayanihan* to Heal as One Act, and its subsequent legislation, the *Bayanihan* to Recover as One Act. “The government also allocated funding in the amount of PhP1 billion or about US\$20.6 million for loans to microenterprises under its CoViD-19 Assistance to Restart Enterprises or CARES Program,” the Consul General added.

Two homegrown Filipino enterprises, Pili Ani and GREAT Women, shared their challenges and experiences in establishing and managing their businesses in the Philippines and lauded the country's business environment that fosters empowerment, inclusive development, and agricultural sustainability among Filipinos at the grassroots.

Pili Ani produces oil-based beauty products and essential oils derived from the Pili fruit, which is indigenous to the Philippines' Bicol Region. Pili Ani's products are being manufactured by Elemie Naturals, Inc. headed by Mary Jane Tan-Ong, and inspired by her mother, Rosalina Tan, who advocates for ethical and sustainable farming. It was Ms. Tan, Pili Ani's founder, who discovered the potential of pili nut and its byproducts.

Jeannie Javelosa, co-founder of the ECHOstore Sustainable Lifestyle and GREAT Women, underscored the importance of finding the right partnerships in doing business in the Philippines, especially for niche brands such as ECHOstore and GREAT Women. “You have to find a partner who shares your values,” she emphasized.

For ECHOstore and GREAT Women, the choice of brand names encapsulates the companies' business values. ECHO is an acronym for Environment & Community Hope Organization and GREAT stands for Gender Responsive Economic Action for the Transformation [of women].



Photo shows the members of the panel discussion.

Ms. Javelosa's companies engage the national network of farmers in the Philippines and more than 40 weaving communities across the country and help them bring their products to the international market. In 2018, Ms. Javelosa's organizations collaborated with the renowned French designer, Christian Louboutin, who used the fabric crafted by GREAT Women's female artisans for its luxury bag collection, Manilacaba.

Another agro product featured in the webinar was virgin coconut oil by Cocoveda, a term combining coconut and *Ayurveda*, an ancient Indian alternative healing method. The company was represented by its Chief Sustainability and Impact Officer, Simarna Singh.

Ms. Singh shared that Cocoveda's marketing strength is tied with the product's health narrative and the company's advocacy for wellness and women empowerment. Instead of mainstream marketing, Cocoveda promotes its products through conversations on health, wellness and women's issues.

Similar to Pili Ani and ECHOstore/GREAT Women, Cocoveda has provided livelihood to local farmers and women and has sustained this advocacy since starting operations in Manila, Philippines in 2015.

The annual GAP is jointly organized by the Jack H. Brown College of Business and Public Administration of the California State University-San Bernardino, GRIIT, the U.S. Small Business Administration Orange County/IE District Office, the Philippine Consulate General in Los Angeles, the Korean Orange County Chamber of Commerce, and Enterprise Singapore, as well as Planet63 and Brandwood CKC.

Members of the Philippine Consulate General's economic diplomacy team, Consul Rea G. Oreta; Trade Commissioner Eric C. Elnar; Agriculture Attaché, Dr. Josyline Javelosa and Information Officer; Mary Grace D. Leaño form part of this year's GAP organizing committee. (Right Photos).



The webinar is available at <https://bit.ly/3iWSkuU>. END.