



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Inauguration of the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center

CAMP CRAME, PHILIPPINES – Law enforcement agencies joined to inaugurate the first Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (“the Center”) at Camp Crame today.

Assistant Commissioner Debbie Platz, National Manager Crime Operations, Australian Federal Police (AFP), said the Center is a hub for domestic Philippine and foreign law enforcement collaborative efforts to combat the online sexual exploitation of children.

“In time, this will become a South-East Asian regional ‘centre of excellence’ for this crime type,” AFP AC Platz said.

The PICACC is a collective effort to combat child exploitation across the Philippines by law enforcement – the Philippine National Police Women and Children’s Protection Center (PNP WCPC), the National Bureau of Investigation Anti-Human-Trafficking Division (NBI AHTRAD), the AFP, and the United Kingdom National Crime Agency (UK NCA); in partnership with non-government organisation, International Justice Mission (IJM). The collaborative international effort is a significant step in their mission of combatting online exploitation of children through an enhanced global response.

The vision of the Center is built on achieving a single aim – striving for a world where children are free from online exploitation.

Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) is one of the most alarming forms of human trafficking in the Philippines today. Sex offenders and predators anywhere in the world can search online and pay to direct live sexual abuse of children.

In 2017 alone, the Philippines received 45,645 National Center for Missing and Exploited Children CyberTips related to OSEC. According to IJM’s data, about 50% of rescued OSEC victims are children aged 12 and below.

Today’s event marked the commencement of the Center’s operational status, in that it is now able to support ongoing OSEC investigations. The Center will be the focal point for all PNP WCPC and NBI AHTRAD regional offices, by providing a national and international support element to those involved in combatting the online exploitation of children. This will eventually involve connectivity with, and enhanced capabilities for, the regional offices of PNP and NBI.

During January 2019, the UK NCA trained agents from the Philippine National Police and the National Bureau of Investigation. The training and equipment will increase Philippine law enforcement ability to gather evidence against perpetrators in the Philippines.

This not only enhances Philippine law enforcements ability to hold perpetrators accountable, but it strengthens their ability to do so without relying as heavily on victim testimony – a welcomed child protective measure.

Mark Bishop, Head of the Asia/Pacific region for the UK National Crime Agency said that the UK is pleased to be part of this collaborative effort in the region to tackle the scourge of Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation.

“NCA, with considerable additional funding from the UK’s Combined Security & Stability Fund, will provide additional manpower and training over the coming years, to help build the Center with our Filipino and Australian partners, all as part of our ever deepening contribution in the ASEAN region,” Bishop emphasised.

The launch of the Center comes at a time of increasing inter-agency collaboration in the Philippines. In March 2018, The PNP Women and Children’s Protection Center, and the NBI Anti-Human Trafficking Division, conducted a joint operation, resulting in the arrest of a 31-year-old Filipino man who was offering his two nieces (aged 9 and 16 at the time of rescue) to perform exploitative acts for foreigners online.

For PNP WCPC Chief, William Macavinta, establishment of the Center is a manifestation of both international and local government and non-government organisations joining hands together and committing to end OSEC.

“The ability to leverage partner agency reach and capability will enhance the collective global law enforcement effort to detect perpetrators and protect children,” Macavinta said.

For NBI AHTRAD Chief, Atty. Janet M. Francisco, nothing can be more appalling than sexually exploiting and abusing our children.

“It is an unforgivable act that deserves no less than condemnation from the international community. With the establishment of the PICACC, local and foreign law enforcement agencies, as well as NGOs, will be working hand in hand to save our children from abuse. It is a leap forward in our quest for a trafficking-free world,” Francisco said.

IJM’s Manila Field Office Director, Atty. Reynaldo Bicol said the online sexual exploitation of children is a borderless crime that requires a robust global law enforcement approach for its deterrence.

“The PICACC is proof that while the crime seems to be prolific, it is only matched by the relentless efforts of multinational law enforcement agencies,” Bicol said.

Images (attached):



Above: Debbie Platz, Assistant Commissioner Debbie Platz, National Manager Crime Operations, Australian Federal Police (*fourth from the left*); Sam Inocencio, IJM Philippines Director (*far left*).



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INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION is a global organisation that protects the poor from violence throughout the developing world. IJM partners with local authorities to rescue victims of violence, bring criminals to justice, restore survivors and strengthen justice systems.

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