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IJM, Team Freedom & Michael Porter Jr. laud Philippine government for Tier 1 status, affirm support to fight OSAEC to the finish

On June 26, 2024, International Justice Mission (IJM) and Team Freedom made a courtesy call to the Department of Justice - Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (DOJ-IACAT) and reaffirmed their commitment to supporting government efforts to combat the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC) in the Philippines.

Team Freedom is a group of athletes and influencers committed to fighting modern slavery in all its forms around the world. The team consists of National Basketball Association (NBA) player Michael Porter Jr., and his family and friends; National Football League (NFL) player Dillon Radunz and his wife; upcoming New York Marathon runner Abbie Radunz; Ms. Universe Singapore, Priyanka Annuncia; and the NFL Patriot's chaplain Jua Robinson and his daughter.

Welcoming IJM and Team Freedom, DOJ Undersecretary Nicholas Felix L. Ty said: "I am grateful for the interest of Team Freedom to join our commitment to combat OSAEC and child sexual abuse and exploitation materials. Today marks a significant moment as we come together to address a critical issue that affects our communities globally. I commend Team Freedom for their unwavering commitment to safeguard the Philippine children and for their partnership with IJM in this global cause."

Usec. Ty welcomed IJM and Team Freedom along with DOJ Assistant Secretary Jose Dominic F. Clavano IV; the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), represented by Malacañang Palace Press Briefer, Daphne Oseña Paez; and the National Coordination Center against Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (NCC-OSAEC-CSAEM), represented by Executive Director Margarita F. Magsaysay.

IJM was represented by their Manila Office Director Reynaldo Bicol; Brand, Media and Communications Director Evelyn Pingul; National Investigation and Law Enforcement Development Director Noel Eballo; and IJM North America's Senior Lead for Influencer and Athlete Partner Programs Mark Herzlich.

Addressing Team Freedom, Malacañang Palace Press Briefer Daphne Oseña Paez said, "As the Philippines strives for economic development that is sustainable and inclusive, it also puts the protection of children at the core of its programs. I hope that through your visit, you may see that the Philippines government is serious about its fight against OSAEC and CSAEM - that no less than the highest office of the land, our own President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., is exhausting all

efforts in fighting this egregious form of violence against children. Though this crime is complex, often hidden, and borderless, by working together we can put an end to OSAEC and CSAEM in the Philippines and the rest of the world.”

IJM and Team Freedom also commended the Philippine Government and all partners in the anti-trafficking sector for retaining the country’s Tier 1 status in the 2024 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report by the U.S. Department of State.

For nine years in a row, the Philippines has remained on Tier 1, the report’s highest classification, for “fully [meeting] the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.” The report, released annually, noted the government’s “serious and sustained efforts” against the crime. During the release of the report, the U.S. Department of State also named IJM Philippines National Director Samson Inocencio Jr. as one of the 2024 TIP Heroes.

Amid this celebration and during the courtesy call, IJM North America’s Mark Herzlich said, “We are sad to acknowledge that our country, the United States, is triggering the largest number of suspicious transactions related to Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation according to the Anti Money Laundering Council (AMLC) 2022 Study. We lament this reality, which is why we are passionate about this issue. Our team in the US advocates for the Earn it Act which will pave the way for the creation of best practices by a congressionally appointed, multi-disciplinary commission of experts to guide the technology industry in proactively detecting, disrupting, and reporting online sexual exploitation of children on their platforms.”

Team Freedom expressed that they are encouraged to see how IJM and the Philippine Government are working together to protect children from online abuse and exploitation. With President Marcos issuing fresh directives to intensify the fight against OSAEC, Team Freedom sees an urgent opportunity to support the Philippine government in its call for collective action to protect Filipino children from this heinous crime.

Of OSAEC, Michael Porter Jr. said, “It is a dark problem in our world today, but being bold and being brave and talking about it and lending our support is what I intend to do going back home and I encourage everyone else to raise their voice because awareness is a big factor in fixing this problem.”

NCC-OSAEC-CSAEM Executive Director Margarita F. Magsaysay said, “We are pleased with the current exposé and high public attention being given against this most vile offense. It is high time that we come together--civil society organizations, NGOs, government agencies, and the private sector--to collaborate. We have conducted strategy meetings with all relevant agencies involved, in order to come up with an action plan to prevent and combat this crime. We’re putting it into motion. We presented it to the President, and he is in full out support of this.”

The partnership between the DOJ-IACAT, the PCO, the NCC-OSAEC-CSAEM, IJM and Team Freedom creates a formidable force of protection around children in the Philippines.

To date, IJM has supported Philippine authorities in bringing over 1,300 victims and children-at-risk to safety and arresting 400 suspected perpetrators, more than 230 of whom have been already convicted.

To report information about online child sexual exploitation, contact the Philippine National Police – Women and Children Protection Center at 0966-725-5961 (Globe) and 0919-777-7377 (Smart). ###