



SUMMARY

OFW Watch Italy put up a webinar featuring Atty. Thorsson Montes Keith, who for months has hit the local headlines in the Philippines for his bombshell revelations on the massive corruption practices in the government-owned Philippine Insurance Corporation or PhilHealth.

Resigned PhilHealth anti-fraud legal officer and whistleblower Atty. Keith's allegation that the state insurer's executives may have pocketed PHP15 billion through fraudulent schemes, became the basis of investigations conducted by the Houses of Congress and Senate, and the Department of Justice.

The webinar via Zoom meeting on September 13, titled: **Uncovering PhilHealth Scam with Resigned PhilHealth Officer Atty. Thorsson Montes Keith**, was hosted by OFW Watch president Rhoderick Ople and moderated Froilan Malit, Jr., managing director of Rights Corridor and host of *RC Dialogues*. Ms. Carmelita Nuque, executive director of Development Action for Women Network (DAWN) Philippines, also joined the virtual event, along with some officers and members of the different chapters of OFW Watch across Italy.

OBJECTIVE

The webinar aimed to discuss the current state of ongoing Philhealth issues that impacted not only Filipinos in the Philippines but also Filipino communities abroad, who strongly opposed the mandatory contribution for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and premium increase that PhilHealth announced earlier this year.

It also aims to understand key issues, lessons for Filipino communities seeking to engage the Philippines' socio-political-related issues and to be able to identify potential approaches to address the corruption problems not just in PhilHealth but also in other government sectors, and suggest ways on how the Filipino diaspora can better engage and make state institutions accountable to their needs.

CONCLUSION

Towards the end of the discussion, the former PhilHealth anti-fraud legal officer suggested the use of technology in order to avoid graft and corruption in PhilHealth in the future, such as the application of Blockchain or Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT), which makes the history of any digital asset unalterable and transparent through the use of decentralization and cryptographic hashing.

The technology will help reduce risks, stamps out fraud and brings transparency into every transaction made by PhilHealth, says Atty. Keith.

He also pointed out the importance of proper implementation of the country's Republic Act No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012 which provides, among others, on how personal information gathered by private companies and government offices should be handled or shared with third parties.

PhilHealth could assert the law on hospital reimbursement claims suspected to be fraudulent, as checking the authenticity of claims for reimbursement by accredited hospitals is an essential part of the agency's mandate. Philhealth is not obliged to make any payments without first verifying the authenticity of the application for claims.

Lastly, Atty. Keith is looking forward to the indictment of the erring members of the PhilHealth Board of Directors and management after all investigations on all allegations are concluded.

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