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The Evolution of Tech Governance in Southeast Asia: Managing Digital Resilience in the Philippines

MAKATI CITY, Philippines—The Tech for Good Institute (TFGI), in collaboration with the Asian Institute of Management Rizalino S. Navarro Center for Competitiveness (AIM-RSN CC), convened government officials, industry representatives, and policy researchers for a closed-door roundtable discussion titled "*The Evolution of Tech Governance in Southeast Asia: Managing Digital Resilience in the Philippines*"

The roundtable provided a platform for regional stakeholders to reflect on the evolving technology governance landscape across Southeast Asia and to examine the Philippines' strategic priorities in governing emerging technologies, with a particular focus on AI governance amid rapid technological change and shifting geopolitical dynamics.

"Regional research delivers most when anchored in local realities," said Arifah Sharifuddin, Institute Director of TFGI. *"The perspectives shared today will sharpen how we understand the region's overall direction, not just what is being legislated, but how different national contexts are translating shared challenges into practice. We are grateful to the Asian Institute of Management Rizalino S. Navarro Center for Competitiveness for partnering with us to ground this conversation in the realities shaping the Philippines today."*

The event also marked the launch of the third edition of TFGI's flagship annual report, *The Evolution of Tech Governance in Southeast Asia (2026)*, which continues to explore how governance policy priorities and approaches are evolving across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

These conversations are unfolding with the Philippines' expanding digital economy, which continues to anchor national growth. The country's digital economy generated approximately USD 44.35 billion (PHP 2.74 trillion) in gross value added in 2025, equivalent to around 9.8 per cent of GDP. In this context, attention is turning to the forthcoming AI Governance Framework for the Philippines, alongside the Philippines' 2026 ASEAN chairmanship and ongoing negotiations on the Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) targeted for completion this year. This underscores the growing importance of adaptive, interoperable, and forward-looking governance approaches that support innovation while safeguarding trust, security, and regional digital integration.

For the Philippine government, this moment calls for decisive and intentional action. *"Resilience should no longer serve as a reason for lack of effective government action. Filipinos have proven they can thrive with meager resources. This, however, should not be the status quo. Government, as the primary enabler, with the support of industry, can stimulate how Filipinos are equipped and positioned not just to survive but to thrive", said* Atty. Leandro Angelo Aguirre, Undersecretary for Strategic Initiatives, Department of Information and Communications Technology.

The roundtable opened with a regional overview of technology governance developments across Southeast Asia-6, examining how governments are responding to key policy priorities, including AI, cybersecurity and data protection, and digital platform regulation. Participants also explored broader governance trends shaping the region's digital landscape, including evolving models of digital sovereignty, structural and institutional changes, and regional coordination across Southeast Asia.

Anchoring the conversation in AIM-RSN CC's long-standing commitment to evidence-based policy, Mr. Guillermo M. Luz, Chairman of the AIM-RSN CC Board of Advisors, called for a broader and more strategic view of the Philippines' digital future. *"Our focus at the AIM Rizalino S. Navarro center for Competitiveness is competitiveness in its fullest sense, not AI alone, but every factor that determined whether the Philippines keeps moving up the competitive ladder. We are pleased to partner with the Tech for Good Institute on this discussion, and we look forward to translating today's exchange into tangible progress. Without a doubt, the Philippines will benefit from AI but we need good public-private collaboration between government and industry to develop a cohesive, long-term strategy for AI for the country,"* said Mr. Luz.

The emphasis on cross-sector collaboration was echoed across the room. *"Realizing the full benefits of technology requires more than access to emerging digital solutions such as AI systems and automation technologies. It demands the intentional construction of innovation ecosystems grounded in cross-sector collaboration amongst governments, the private sector, and academia,"* noted Keith Detros, Programme Manager of TFGI.

Grounding these discussions in local policy realities, a second presentation traced the Philippines' 2025 policy developments shaping the digital economy. The session examined four interlocking governance shifts spanning institutional reorganization, the digitalization of public services, the operationalization of digital economy frameworks, and a strengthened ICT infrastructure agenda. Together, these developments signal a continued move towards whole-of-nation approaches to cybersecurity, AI-enabled public services, and the Philippines' emergence as a regional connectivity and data center hub.

Building on these insights, the roundtable then brought together representatives from government, academia, industry, and regional policy institutions for an in-depth discussion on the Philippines' evolving approach to AI governance. Participants exchanged perspectives on current regulatory developments, institutional coordination, and the broader implications of regional digital integration, including ongoing ASEAN initiatives under the Philippines' 2026 chairmanship.

Key contributors to the discussion included Monchito Ibrahim, Lead Convener, Alliance of Tech Innovators for the Nation; Josephine Romero, Senior Adviser, ABAC Philippines; Prof. Christian M. Alis, PhD, Academic Program Director of the Master of Science in Data Science, Asian Institute of Management; Grace Mirandilla Santos, Independent Policy Researcher; Frances Claire Tayco, Chief Executive Officer, CirroLytix Research Services; Sherwin Pelayo, Executive Director, Analytics & Artificial Intelligence Association of the Philippines; and Marbida L. Marbida, Director of Better Regulations Office, Anti-Red Tape Authority. Together, they shared their perspectives on the Philippines' policy priorities and strategic directions for 2026.

As Southeast Asia navigates an increasingly complex technology landscape, AIM-RSN CC and TFGI will continue to support regional dialogue grounded in research, comparative insight, and the perspectives of those shaping policy on the ground.

About the Tech for Good Institute

The Tech for Good Institute (TFGI) is a non-profit policy research institute working to advance the promise of technology and the digital economy for inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth in Southeast Asia (SEA). TFGI serves as a platform for research, conversations and collaborations focused on SEA, while staying connected to the rest of the world. Our work is centred on issues at the intersection of technology, society and the economy, and is intrinsically linked to the region's development. We seek to understand and inform policy with rigour, balance and perspective by using research, effective outreach and evidence-based recommendations.

TFGI works in partnership with the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth and Grab, to advance the vision of a thriving and innovative SEA for all. We welcome opportunities for partnership and support, financial or in-kind, from organisations and individuals committed to fostering responsible innovation and digital progress for sustainable growth in the region.

More information about the Institute can be accessed at www.techforgoodinstitute.org

About AIM-Rizalino S. Navarro Center for Competitiveness

First established as the AIM Policy Center in 1996, the Asian Institute of Management-Rizalino S. Navarro Center for Competitiveness (AIM-RSN CC) is the public policy think tank and research arm of the Asian Institute of Management. It focuses on two main research tracks: building competitiveness and promoting shared prosperity, and competition policy.

Since its inception, AIM-RSN CC has conducted leading policy and academic research and assisted several multilateral organizations and actor from both the public and private sectors. Practical application lies at the core of its mission—after deriving research findings, the Center works closely with governments, businesses, and organizations to implement policy recommendations through workshops, seminars, and policy dialogues that drive meaningful change. The Center has been instrumental in supporting the continuing growth and development of the Philippines and Asia through evidence-based, actionable research.

More information can be accessed at Rizalino S. Navarro Center for Competitiveness | Asian Institute of Management