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**MALACAÑANG PRESS BRIEFING HOSTED BY PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS
OFFICE (PCO) ASSISTANT SECRETARY DALE DE VERA WITH SOCIAL SECURITY
SYSTEM PRESIDENT AND CEO ROBERT JOSEPH M. DE CLARO**

JANUARY 07, 2024 [10:45 A.M. – 11:26 A.M.]

PCO ASEC. DE VERA: Magandang umaga, Malacañang Press Corps. Welcome sa ating press briefing ngayong araw, January 7.

Simula ngayong Enero, ipapatupad ng Social Security System ang 1% increase sa kontribusyon ng mga miyembro nito. Itataas nito ang contribution rate sa 15% mula sa kasalukuyang 14%. Mahalaga ang increase na ito para mapahaba ang serbisyo ng SSS sa mga miyembro nito at suportahan ang pamahalaan sa panahon ng kalamidad sa pamamagitan ng calamity loans.

Para bigyan pa tayo ng detalye tungkol dito at sa mga plano ng SSS sa 2025, kasama natin ngayon si SSS President and CEO Robert Joseph de Claro. Good morning, President de Claro.

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Good morning, everyone. First of all, I would like to thank the Malacañang Press Corps for giving me the opportunity to explain kung ano ba itong SSS increase na 1%.

Balikan lang ho natin na ang SSS ay 68, we're on our 68th year and part ng statement that we released this morning is ano ba ho itong increase na in-implement natin last January 1. Alam ninyo po, itong increase na ito ay napapaloob sa batas ng RA 11199 and ito ho iyong last increase for SSS and I would like to say that I don't foresee any more further increases in the future.

Ano ba ho ang napapaloob sa increase na ito? Ito ho ay tatlong bagay – iyong increase na sinasabi na 1% and that's the title of our press statement 'no, is that to clarify that 1% increase. So, ang napapaloob ho sa batas na 11199 is that ang increase ay nagsimula noong 2019 na from 11 naging 12 until matapos po to 15% which is January of this year.

Ang kasama ho nitong increase na ito is iyong pag-increase ng monthly salary credit sa ating... on the lower scale, from P4,000 to P5,000 and iyong sa higher scale po is from P30,000 to P35,000.

Ano ba ho itong monthly salary credit na ito? Ito'y napakaimportanteng factor because dito ho kina-calculate ang daily salary credit ng ating mga miyembro which forms as a basis of all the benefits of SSS, most of the benefits. Bigyan ko ho kayo ng example: Itong 1% increase, ano ba ho ito? Iyong monthly salary credit na na-increase from P4,000 to P5,000 and from 14% to 15%, ang katumbas na daily salary credit ho sa ating miyembro is for 30 pesos. So, ang dagdag ho ng contribution natin at P5,000 monthly salary credit is P190.

So, kung susumahin ho natin, one benefit ng SSS is kapag nagkasakit ho ang ating mga miyembro – iyong 30 pesos ho na iyon and each member is allowed I think 120 days in a calendar year for sickness benefit. So, kung magkasakit ho kayo halimbawa ng 30 days, so iyong 30 pesos na dagdag ho because of this increase – you multiply it by 30 days, 900 pesos ho iyon. Ang puhunan ho natin doon sa dagdag na contribution is 190 pesos. So, sa short term ay may benefit

ho. Sa long term, similar, I would say salary bracket, 400 pesos ho ang katumbas nitong increase na ito.

So, sa 190 pesos ho na idadagdag ninyo ho sa contribution ninyo on a monthly basis, kapag nag-retire ho kayo and alam naman ho natin na with 120 contributions, you are eligible for pension, so ang dagdag ho noon is 400 pesos. So, kung ika-calculate ninyo ho, 190 pesos in 10 years is about P22,000-something – within five years of retirement, nabawi ninyo na ho iyong 190 pesos na iyon. Ang life expectancy ho ng mga Pilipino ay nasa mga 72 years. So ibig sabihin, from age 66 until 72, ano na ho iyon, tubong lugaw na.

So, ang programa ho ng SSS, hindi lang ho tinitingnan iyong short term but even iyong long-term benefits for our members. I think doon po napapaloob itong last increase na ito because... kaya din ho nagpapasalamat ako na nabigyan ng opportunity kami na i-clarify itong last increase is that ayaw din naman ho nating mag-suffer ang ating mga miyembro. Kasi kapag idinefer (defer) ho natin itong increase na ito, the reality is ang nahihirapan is ang ating mga miyembro because iyong additional daily benefit nila po in case magkaroon sila ng sakuna, hindi ho nila makukuha ito.

So, I think iyon ang—I wanted to make that statement and have you open for Q and A na. Thank you.

PCO ASEC. DE VERA: Thank you PCEO. First question, Maricel Halili, TV5.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Hi, sir, magandang umaga po. Sir, sa kabila po ng mga explanations ninyo, mayroon pa ring panawagan to suspend iyong increase this January citing iyong sunud-sunod na nangyari sa ating calamities. What are the chances na pakinggan itong suspension?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Actually ho, kami sa SSS, kami'y sumusunod lang ho sa batas na napapaloob itong Social Security System, and the latest is 11199. I understand na there's a specific group na wants... is requesting to suspend it. But I think the challenge there is, mayroon ho kaming contribution subsidy program. Baka ho ang ating mga kapatid na mga mambabatas na nag-o-oppose—na nagri-request na i-delay ito, hindi ba pupuwedeng i-subsidize nila para sa kanilang mga miyembro itong dagdag na 190 pesos, na dagdag in contribution.

Kasi ho, mas marami ang maaapektuhan kung i-suspend ho natin itong increase na ito. Bukod sa opportunity ng SSS na makatulong during times of calamity, last year we gave out around 9.8 million in loans for calamity-stricken areas, Carina and I think Kristine, madami ho kaming natulungan – about 500,000 members. So, kapag idi-delay ho natin itong increase na ito, hindi lang ho magsa-suffer ang mga miyembro, wala silang opportunity but also iyong capacity ho ng SSS na tumulong in times of need.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Sir, do we have an estimate as to how much iyong puwedeng mawala doon sa contribution kapag sinuspend lang, let's say for a few months? Do we have a computation on that?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Yeah. Actually, we have a... we did some calculation. Ang impact kasi nito is hindi—dahil minimal ang impact nito with regards to iyong tinatawag nating fund life or viability of the SSS pa, iyong short-term benefit ang mawawala talaga sa mga miyembro natin in case na mangailangan sila ng tulong. And that is very important to us kasi bakit natin idi-deprive iyong miyembro na magkasakit ng additional benefit na 30 pesos?

And in fact, just to give you... you know, the universe of SSS today, 75% of the contributions is coming from the formal sector, from the employed sector and we are very elated to hear the message from Mr. Ortiz of ECOP on the acceptance of this increase from the employers. Kasi iyong increase ho, hindi din naman ano eh... this last increase, may katumbas ho—hindi lang ho miyembro ang magbabayad – kalahati ho ang miyembro at saka employer. So, for the voluntary members na ito iyong mga posibleng mga manggagawa natin, ang katumbas ho nito is 190 pesos 'no.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Thank you, sir.

PCO ASEC. DE VERA: Next question, Cath Domingo, ABS-CBN

CATH DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Hi, sir. Good morning. Sir, why are we implementing an increase when the COA has flagged the SSS collection underscoring that in 2023, the SSS only collected less than five percent of its over 90 billion in collectibles?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Yeah, I think you're referring to—and thank you for that question. I think you're referring to the ... it's an old COA report that talks about the delinquency of employers from SSS; at that time, it was around 89 billion. But after reconciliation, as of October 2024, that numbers gone down to around 46 billion and we are constantly working on trying to assess ano bang sources nitong discrepancy na ito.

CATH DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Sir, it's based on a June 2024 document, and it's not just the delinquency of SSS employees but also members. Let me read the portion of the document, if you may.

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Sure.

CATH DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: It says that, the inefficiency in collecting premium contributions from delinquent employers with only 4.581 billion collected, that's merely 4.89% of the established collectibles. Doesn't it seem unfair for members to have SSS collect more considering that over 90% remains uncollected?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: I think it's not a fair statement also because the total collection of SSS for 2024 is around 390 billion. And, you know, what you're referring to is an ...while it probably released in June, the basis of information was sometime in, I think, 2022. So ... and I am open to have a further discussion on the matter to clarify. But hindi, I mean, nag-i-increase kami pero hindi kami nagkukolekta ng mga contributions.

Alam naman ho natin na ang SSS ay tinamaan ng pandemic – madaming manggagawa ang hindi nakapag-contribute; madaming mga businesses ang nagsara. And actually continuous nga ho ang aming communication dito sa ating mga employers na nahihirapan dahil mayroon silang delinquency. We have a condonation program. And I'll take this opportunity, na may condonation program po tayo during the time of pandemic, kung mayroon pa ho kayong hindi nababayaran sa SSS, pumunta lang ho kayo sa mga branch namin or sa aming head office para ho maupuan natin at maip plano natin kung papaano ninyo masi-settle itong delinquency.

Tuluy-tuloy ho ang aming ... hindi lang ho sa ating mga miyembro but sa ating mga employers na aming partners – they are our main stakeholders. And as I mentioned, 75% of our collection comes from the employed sector.

CATH DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Sir, follow up. What is the current or updated delinquency rate of SSS?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Delinquency in relation to loans?

CATH DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Collection, sir.

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Collection on premium contributions?

CATH DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Yes, sir.

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: I have to get back to you on the exact number. But what I know is that we are going at 30% year on year. We are fortunate enough that our population is still growing and we are still in a pyramid structure that—alam ninyo naman we are a pension fund, so the people that contributes today, ang magbi-benefit niyan are the ones that contributed 20 years ago.

Iyong delinquency kasi it's by law that you have to pay SSS contribution if you are employed, and that's 75% of our membership base. What I know is for the employed sector, 97% of our formal sector is paying the right contribution rate. So we have about three percent na hinahabol ho namin. And part of our plans for 2025 is papaano namin papaigtingin pa ang collection efforts dito sa mga employers na probably nahihirapan magbayad dahil mayroon silang arrears noong time ng pandemic.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Good morning, sir. I would just like to know how much is the net income and benefits payment of SSS in 2024? And how much is the reserve fund?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Yeah, actually, I'd like to answer that question in the context na magkaiba ho kami sa PhilHealth with regard iyong PhilHealth law and SSS law. Please don't compare iyong reserve fund ng PhilHealth which is ibang batas sa SSS law. In terms of what we project is I think we are expecting around—. Para mas clear 'no: Ang pumapasok po na pera sa SSS comes from three sources. Number one is iyong contributions from our members and through the employers; iyong income namin coming from our investments; and the third one is other income namin from our assets and also from the loans that we issue to our members.

Ang lumalabas naman na pera sa SSS is iyong benefits na payout namin. And sa ngayon ho, ang pinakamalaking portion ng benefits na iyon are coming from the pension and also the death and funeral benefits. So, iyong plus-minus, we are expecting around north of 100 billion this year that would be going to part of our—I could not call it reserve, yeah, I think we can call it as a reserve fund.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Tapos additional po. Given the increase in member contributions, how will this affect the fund life of SSS? And when are you projecting this to last?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Thank you for the question. And I'd like to take this opportunity also to explain a little bit about itong fund life because there might be some notion na itong increase na ito is purely related sa fund life. During the last administration, nagbigay ng increase ng 1,000 pesos, the former president, and ang impact nito sa fund life ng SSS, biglang naging up to 2032 na lang at that stage. So, 14 years na lang ho ang buhay ng fund life ng SSS.

I am happy to report that as of the moment, we have already doubled the fund life – it's now 28 years, up to 2053. But then, actuarial ho kasi ito eh. Ang ideal na – kung tatanungin ninyo kasi kasama ko ho dito ang aming chief actuary, si Senior Vice President Ed Cruz – 68 years po sa actuarial science ang ideal for a pension fund. And the reason why mayroon tayong tinatawag na fund life is because defined po ang benefit ng SSS. And that is something that we will be working on this year, about studies on how to convert from being purely defined benefit to a variable benefit na.

Ano ho ang impact nito? Sa ngayon ho, there is no way for us to increase the pension of our 3.6 million members because naka-define benefit ito eh. And ang katumbas ho nitong fund life ng SSS would be the unfunded liability which the way it's calculated sa actuarial science is 68 years, kaya in the trillions ho ito.

So, going back to your question, iyong 100 billion ho na ito na dagdag income ng SSS is we would have to invest it, invest the money where it is allowed within our charter. And hopefully, as we transition to finding ways and means to provide better benefits to our members, makakatulong ho itong perang ito. In the press statement that I released this morning, ang katumbas nitong last tranche of increase is around 51.3 billion. Iyon ho iyon kabuuan, annualized and 35 percent of this money goes directly to the account of the member. Kaya kailangan ho...we understand, we are sensitive, we acknowledge iyong mga requests ho on the suspension ng SSS for the increase. Pero balikan ko ho, mas mahihirapan ho ang ating mga manggagawang Pilipino 'pag isu-suspend natin ito o idi-delay kasi ang perang makukuha ho ng SSS ay magagamit ho para mapa-improve pa ang benefits natin in the future.

And in this increase nga, itong increase lang na ito sinasabi ko ho sa inyo na on the lower scale which is from 4,000 to 5,000 na nag-increase from 14 to 15 percent – ang katumbas ho nito na halaga is 30 pesos daily salary credits. So para sa mga tao, again, kapag nagkasakit ka, iyong 190 pesos na dagdag na contribution mo ay mababawi mo iyon kung magkasakit ka ng anim na araw and if you get sick – which you are allowed to claim from SSS 120 days – 3,600 ho iyong katumbas noon. So, ayaw naman ho nating...ang mas mahihirapan ho ang gobyerno dahil pupunuan niya iyong karagdagang perang iyon sa mga taong magkakasakit in the future.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Sir, last question na lang po, na-mention din po nila kanina na parang after po ng implementation noong last tranche ng RA 11199, hindi na po natin kailangan ng further premium hike. Until when po kaya iyong magla-last na hindi natin kailangang mag-increase ng premium?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: What I can assure the public is that the Social Security Commission and its management team is committed to working on that 15 percent as the last increase because it doesn't also make sense when you have to pay more than 15 percent from your salary considering that you have to pay your income tax which is around 25 to 30 percent and liliit talaga iyong take-home [pay].

So, actually, I take this opportunity, sa ating mga mambabatas na gustong tumulong sa SSS, kaysa ipa-suspend natin itong increase na ito bakit hindi po tayo umupo at pag-usapan kung papaano ninyo matutulungan ang ating manggagawa by entering into agreement with SSS on contribution subsidy program which is open to all private individuals. Iyong mga nakakaluwag ho sa buhay, we encourage you to also work with SSS na baka may mga specific segments of our society na matutulungan natin – ano ba ho ito? Example, iyong TODA, kung kayo po ay nakatira sa isang lugar na mayroong TODA doon and sila ho ay nahihirapang mag-contribute sa SSS, puwede ho tayong tumulong eh kasi iyon iyong aming programa na hindi masyadong nadi-

disseminate sa ating mga mas nakakaluwag sa buhay na puwede ho kayong tumulong for people that you wouldn't know towards their social protection.

PCO ASEC. DE VERA: Next question, Ivan Mayrina, GMA 7.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: Sir, balikan ko lang iyong finlag [flagged] ng COA, what are we doing to address inefficiencies in our collections?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Okay. So, before being President of SSS, I was the chairperson of the Collection and Contribution Committee, we have constantly both—on a policy level, we are reviewing iyong policy ng SSS with regard to delinquency and I guess most of you are aware that we have what we call RACE Program, Run After Contributor Evaders, na itutuloy pa ho rin namin ito sa 2025.

Madami ho kasing mga nagsarang kumpanya na may delinquency. But rest assured, through all legal means we are going after those employers that number one, ang pinakamasama is iyong nagbawas ka ng contribution from your employee tapos hindi mo ni-remit sa SSS. Kaya ho may kaukulang kulong kapag napatunayan na kinuha mo iyong pera ng inyong manggagawa.

So, the answer to the question is we are constantly monitoring. Today, for the formal sector, I mentioned about three percent delinquency. But then again, we are addressing it both, policy and operations, so tuluy-tuloy ho ang RACE Program ng SSS.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: I asked, sir, because you said that with one percent increase in contributions more or less 51 billion ang mari-raise natin dito. So, if we can collect the 89 billion na deficiency natin sa collection, we might not have to increase contributions. I know it might be a simplistic way of looking at it pero baka ho ganoon ang isipin ng mga kababayan natin na, “Bakit ninyo ako sinisingil ng extra eh hindi ninyo naman makolekta iyong mga delinquencies nila?”

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Yeah. I really appreciate the question and actually the number and as I mentioned earlier, that number is already around 46 billion, very close to 51. But then again, as I've been trying to share with you, it's not about iyong bakit natin pahhirapan and dadagdagan iyong burden sa ting mga miyembro. Let's look at it from the other side – in case may mangyari sa miyembro natin at we prevent this increase, ang magsa-suffer ho in the end is ang ating members eh na hindi sila makakakuha ng karagdagang benepisyo sa SSS because hindi natin in-implement itong increase na ito. Kasi ano ho eh...hindi lang iyong one percent increase, you have to understand, iyong monthly salary credit has also changed.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: Sir, last from my end, sorry. Iyong 68 years ho na fund life natin, kailan natin iyon target ma-achieve?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: It's a good question. In fact, I asked that question the last time in one of our committee meetings and actually that is utopia from the actuarial people – 68 years. The reality is, once we are able to shift from a defined benefit to something variable or a hybrid model, then that fund life of 68 years doesn't come into play much because of the corresponding impact with regards to the unfunded liability. Ano iyan eh, actuarial studies pero I think iyong 68 years is a dream na unless we get subsidy from the government, which today I'm happy to report na we are self-sustaining, I don't think it's practical also to target 68 years.

PCO ASEC. DE VERA: Eden Santos, Net 25.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Follow-up lang p ako doon sa naitanong ni Kuya Ivan kanina about doon sa mga employer po na hindi nagre-remit, ilang porsiyento po itong mga ito at mayroon na po ba tayong napatawan ng punishment?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: As I shared earlier, we are looking at a number, siguro a little less than three percent of iyong delinquent employers. In terms of iyong napatawan ho ng kaparusahan, I assure you there have been a number of employers na have been convicted but at the same time there are a lot of pending cases in the court now with regard sa collection kasi labag ho sa batas kapag hindi ka nagbayad ng SSS.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: So, ilan po iyong three percent na iyon? Mga 100 employers?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Iyong three percent ho siguro, we're looking at around a number of three percent of 30,000 – siguro mga 900.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Nine hundred employers?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Employers.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Iyon pong mga iyon ay existing pa iyong mga negosyo or mayroon na pong nagsara after the pandemic?

SSS PRES. & CEO DE CLARO: Actually ho maganda hong katanungan kasi iyon ho ang aming employers na nagbabayad na may naka-register na employees. The universe of employees in SSS is around north of 900,000; madami po doon iyong maliliit na mga negosyo, and napapaloob din po doon iyong ating mga kasambahay na 260,000 ang naka-register na kasambahay employers. So, ang minention ko lang na 3% is doon sa purely employed sector. Kasi ho, I'll take this opportunity na rin, for 2025, we will improve iyong aming registration and collection for the kasambahay natin. Kasi alam ko po na itong segment na ito ay medyo mahirap mag-contribute, mahirap mag-remit and iyong reporting kapag umalis na po iyong kasambahay ay medyo mahirap din po.

And also, iyong 'gig economy'. We are at a stage now that our population we have a number of workers involved in gig and that is one segment na pinag-aaralan po namin kung ano ba itong tamang handling nitong segment na ito from a contribution to benefits and maybe further to insurance. Iyon po ang tinitingnan namin.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Last question lang po in my end. Iyong kanina nabanggit po ninyo iyong mga makikinabang dito sa increase po nito, 1%, hindi po 15%, hindi ba, kasama doon sa 15% na kabuuan ay 20 years ago po iyong mga makikinabang dito? Parang kung titingnan po natin, bakit napakalayo noong taon na makikinabang dito sa increase na ito?

SSS PRES & CEO DE CLARO: Hindi naman po 20 years, what I am saying is that, iyong for the short-term benefit, for the short term, mayroon pong mga benepisyo talagang makukuha. But at the same time, the way it's crafted is that may long-term effect din po.

PCO ASEC. DE VERA: Alvin Baltazar, Radyo Pilipinas.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Hi, sir. Magandang umaga po. Sir, since ito ay batas eh talaga namang dapat nating ipatupad pero mayroon ba tayong nakikitang win-win solution para kahit papaano, or legal remedy para kahit papaano ma-delay iyong pagpapatupad?

SSS PRES & CEO DE CLARO: Pinag-aaralan din po namin ano bang options. But kami po, please understand that we are a GOCC and we are tasked to implement the law that covers our institution. So, kung mayroon pong—kasi po batas ito, so ibig sabihin kailangan pong ma-amend ang batas para ma-suspend itong contribution na ito. And kagaya nga po ng—I saw on TV the other day, si Congressman Acidre, he mentioned na it is not something na you would suspend abruptly, kailangan po pinag-aaralan. And ang 68 years po na ang SSS ay in existence, and over the years ay ilan pong batas na din ang na-amend for the SSS law.

In fact, in the inception po ng SSS, ang covered lang po ng SSS was the formal sector; it was only in 1980 that na-expand po to cover iyong voluntary members. So, similarly, I think, if Congress would study the existing SSS law, there's no reason for us not to implement the law if ever it will be amended.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: So, ibig sabihin, sir, habang pinag-aaralan natin, tuloy ang kaltas, magri-reflect na doon sa payslip ngayong darating na January 15 and January 31?

SSS PRES & CEO DE CLARO: Yes, actually. That's the reality, because if we don't implement naman the law, then kami naman po iyong would be breaking iyong batas; kami naman po ang mananagot sa sambayanan.

PCO ASEC. DE VERA: Kat Domingo, ABS-CBN.

KAT DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Hi, sir. Sir, just for the spirit of transparency, may we know bakit po nag-quadruple iyong expenses sa personal services, because I am just thinking na maybe if we can reduce some expenses, maybe there is no need to hike regardless of the law. Maybe our lawmakers would have more reason to amend the law to suspend it. Anyway, sir, in 2022 SSS spent nearly 500 million for other personal benefits. That ballooned to P2 billion in 2023. May we know bakit ganoon po kalaki iyong increase?

SSS PRES & CEO DE CLARO: Yeah, actually we can look at it in absolute terms, but the reality is, the operating cost of SSS as an institution is only 25% of what is allowed in our charter. So, while iyong absolute figure might be significant in relation to running an institution, I think that number most likely is justified because it wasn't flagged by COA. And we are working closely with COA to ensure that—Ito lang ho eh, in simplistic term: The fund is growing by around 20 to 30% year-on-year since after the pandemic. In terms of iyong aming headcount ng SSS, iyong mga plantilla position together with JOs, hindi po ito nadadagdagan.

In fact, ang kakulangan po ng mga tao ng SSS is in the thousand. So, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank also the men and women of SSS, kasi kahit hindi po nadagdagan ang aming mga tao, iyong serbisyo naman is nami-maintain, eh nadadagdagan po, we are growing at around 20 to 30% year-on-year. So, we have about 6,800 employees full time and we have about maybe a thousand job orders today, and I think the ideal number still around north of 9,000 because we are growing.

Ang plano po ng SSS is to put additional branches in the future because we acknowledge that there should be a balance between digitalization and face-to-face interaction pa rin.

KAT DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Sir, just a clarification, ano po iyong expenses under personal benefits? Does it include bonuses?

SSS PRES & CEO DE CLARO: I have to get back to you on the details, but we are also covered by the GCG law and also we are in compliance with the Civil Service rules and regulations. So, iyong bonuses as a government employee are always aligned with what is allowed by the Civil Service and the GCG Law.

PCO ASEC. DE VERA: Last question, Tristan Nodalo, NewsWatch Plus.

TRISTAN NADALO/NEWSWATCH PLUS: Hi, sir good morning po. Sir, itanong ko lang, nag-usap na po ba kayo ni President Marcos regarding this SSS contribution? Hiningi po ba niya iyong recommendation ninyo and so far, ano po iyong input naman ni President?

SSS PRES & CEO DE CLARO: I haven't had a direct conversation with the President. But I have been in touch with the Secretary of Finance who chairs the social security commission. And I think in terms of messaging, it's just about being transparent and, you know, you present the programs that you have and explain the benefits why we are increasing the 14% to 15% and increasing their monthly salary credit. So, there is no instruction naman to—but you know, the instruction really is to call a spade a spade and be transparent with this increase that was implemented in January.

PCO ASEC. DE VERA: Thank you, before we end, may we ask P/CEO De Claro for a closing statement?

SSS PRES & CEO DE CLARO: Again, nais kong pasalamatang ang Malacañang Press Corps for giving the Social Security System the opportunity to clarify certain matters, itong increase na ito. And I would like to take this opportunity, kasi kailangan po namin ang tulong ninyo to further educate ang ating mga miyembro, ang ating mga employers, ano ba ho ang mga benepisyo talaga ng SSS para sa ating mga manggagawa.

And that is why, I am proposing that probably, we can have maybe once every two months forum para makuha din po namin ang inyong feedback on how we can improve our service, at the same time we can have the media help us to explain further, ano ba ho iyong SSS, ano ba iyong benepisyo ng SSS at papaano po magiging bahagi ng buhay ninyo ang SSS hanggang nandirito po tayo sa lupa. So, iyon lang po, maraming salamat po sa opportunity at mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas. Mabuhay ang SSS! Thank you.

PCO ASEC. DE VERA: Thank you, sir. At dito na po nagtatapos ang ating press briefing kasama ang Social Security System. Thank you, President De Claro and Malacañang Press Corps. Magandang umaga po.

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