MANILA, Philippines — The passage of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act is of 'paramount importance' in achieving the Aquino government's advocacy for a “daang matuwid,” anti-corruption advocates in the Senate said.

Senators Edgardo Angara and Franklin Drilon made this assessment yesterday as they formally led the launching of the fifth international conference of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) held at the Claro M. Recto Room of the Senate of the Philippines in Pasay City.

Both lawmakers agree that the Philippines ought to improve its anti-corruption efforts considering it has passed so many good laws to combat corruption compared to other countries especially in Southeast Asia.

"It is indeed ironic that the Philippines can produce so many good laws against corruption, and set up outstanding institutions against corruption and yet cannot implement it well," Angara said.

"Why can't we not implement it? One of the reasons, which Sen. Drilon has mentioned, I think is leadership by example. But I think over all, everyone must pull together… the issue of corruption must be seen in the context of culture of the people. If there is no culture of obedience, then there is no culture of rule of law. No matter what you law you pass, it cannot be implemented," Angara said.

The passage of the FOI bill, which until now has not moved in the House of Representatives, is critical as the measure is seen to aid media practitioners in promoting transparency and fulfill their mandate to report corrupt practices in the bureaucracy.

The Senate itself has passed its own version of the FOI bill and is awaiting for the measure to enter bicameral conference committee deliberations.

"The media plays a major role in combating a formidable foe like corruption...with the Internet and social media available, the media has become the most pervasive in relating stories about corruption," said University of the Philippines Dean Georgina Encanto.

**Comments**

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