

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

There's still work to be done...

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front the challenges of our time, even as we're joined tonight by so many presidents and prime ministers – this Global Initiative reminds us what we can do as individuals: that you don't have to hold public office to be a public servant," President Obama said, adding: "That's the beauty of service – anyone can do it and

everyone should try." Since 2005, more than 100 current and former heads of state; hundreds of leading CEOs, philanthropists, and NGO leaders; and 10 of the last 16 Nobel Peace Prize laureates have attended CGI's Annual Meeting. President Obama in his keynote speech said, "Bill Clinton has helped improve and save

the lives of millions." The President also paid tribute to CGI and its members for the efforts they have been exerting through the years.

"After a lifetime of service, he would have been forgiven had he settled for a life of quiet, a life of ease, a life of improved golf scores – my understanding is they have not improved that much since he was in office – but he chose a different path," Obama said, "This global initiative reminds us of what we can each do as individuals."

The President said the mission of the Clinton Global Initiative reminds everyone of what individuals can do to change the world through service.

"If you want to bring about change in the world, you can't just be an advocate of somebody else doing it. You can't just preach lofty goals and wait for somebody else act. You have to step up. You have to serve."

For his part, Clinton joked that "we'd throw a party and

no one would come" because of the economic meltdown. On the contrary, he reported that the attendance this year is more than the previous years' records.

"In the midst of a global financial crisis, it doesn't surprise me that more people are attending this meeting than ever before," Clinton said. "Since 2005, it has become clear that CGI has found an effective model for addressing challenges around the world."

It was another star-studded opening plenary, attended not just by more than 60 current and former heads of state but also the chief executives of Coca-Cola, Walmart, Nissan, ExxonMobil and Goldman Sachs. Hollywood stars like Matt Damon, Ashton Kutcher, Demi Moore and Jessica Alba added star power to the meeting.

Clinton had warm words and praise for President Obama.

"I think it is worth reminding all of you that our president

Villar, Pimentel...

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against cheating [during the elections]. Otherwise, success in governance is in peril."

"I am confident we can manage the 2010 elections. We hope the elections will be okay since this is the first time it will be automated," Villar further stated.

Pimentel echoed Villar's view and said the safety of the elections will depend on the Filipino people.

"We have more confidence now in the Comelec than before," Pimentel said. "Ultimately, it is not the Comelec who will protect the elections, but the people. Senator Villar is the only candidate who is organized in the whole nation, and who has the machinery in place."

Asked about attracting foreign investments to the Philippines, Senator Villar said that creating a money-making environment and showing results are keys to this.

"We have to look at it from a capitalistic point of view," he

explained, drawing from his conversations with fund managers during his time in the private sector. "They want to make money. And the only thing they understand is, 'Are we going to make money there?'"

"Why are we going to invest in the Philippines?" If every time they go to the Philippines, they don't see anything and don't see any change – they see the same buildings, the same roads, the same everything – they are not going to invest.

"But if they see something things happening – roads being built, infrastructure being built, more classrooms being built, and the GDP numbers are improving, then investments will flow and growth can be achieved," Villar stated, while adding that if that growth can be sustained, foreign investors and balikbayans will both be coming to invest in the Philippines even without an invitation.

Senator Villar even made the guests chuckle when he declared, "I don't want to hear them [foreign investors] say they want to come just because Filipinos are hospitable, I want them to come and say, 'I wanna go to the Philippines because I want to make money.'"

With respect to the "brain drain" taking place in the Philippines, Senator Villar said this can be reversed if the economy can be improved which means faster growth, creation of more jobs and giving Filipinos business opportunities to work on.

"The ultimate goal is we want to have a country where Filipinos don't want to leave [to seek jobs]," said Villar. "If we improve the economy, then they won't have to leave and suffer. There are many overseas workers who suffer like those in the Middle East who want to come home but do not know where to go. We see Filipinos who work as domestic helpers who are abused. It is important to give them a safety net. We have got to reverse this now."

As for the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), both Villar and Pimentel said that it should be honored and respected by both countries.

"The VFA should be made to work for the benefit of the Phil-

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