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Board of Trustees

24 June 2009

A fresh start for Philippine swimming

To the Philippine Swimming Community:

Warmest greetings from the Aquaticsports Association of the Philippines, Inc. (ASAP).

ASAP is a non-stock, non-profit organization registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission. As stated in its Articles of Incorporation, ASAP aims *“to promote swimming and other aquatic sports throughout the country; and to recruit, train and develop world-class athletes to represent our country in various international competitions.”*

ASAP is headed by Atty. Luz Arzaga-Mendoza as president, with Atty. Jane Ong as vice-president; Susan Papa, secretary; Beth Mascardo of synchronized swimming, treasurer; Augusto Bonilla and Cesar Espino, trustees.

The Board of Trustees also includes the following regional representatives:

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The ASAP is envisioned as a truly participative national association for swimming and other aquatic sports in the Philippines. All the

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regional representatives are voting members of the Board of Trustees, which in turn will pass upon policies that will govern the operations and management of ASAP.

Aquatic Sports Development Program

It will be the role of ASAP to develop aquatic sports in the grassroots level, strengthen local clubs by empowering their regional organizations, and provide administrative and support services at the national level.

- At the local level, ASAP will strengthen swimming clubs by providing continuing education for their coaches, utilizing both local and foreign trainers in a skills and technology transfer program covering the various sports disciplines in aquatics.
- Regional swimming and aquatic sports associations, on the other hand, will be assisted in their development programs while giving them full autonomy in charting their organizations. ASAP will assist the various regional associations in crafting a framework for a talent identification program at the regional level.
- At the national level, ASAP will liaison with government and private institutions for the funding of its various projects. A national training pool will be formed and maintained for preparing qualified athletes for international competitions.

For the foregoing objectives, ASAP is seeking recognition from the Federation Internationale de Natation (FINA).

Why ASAP?

Much as we at ASAP are keeping a positive outlook over the bright future ahead of aquatic sports, we must state our position vis-à-vis the erstwhile national swimming association: The problems besetting PASA are inextricably linked to the rationale behind the formation of ASAP.

The past year has been a time of great uncertainty for the local swimming community. It is incumbent upon us as stakeholders to step in, face the issues, and pave the way for a better and truly participative national sports association.

For quite some time now, PASA has been turned into the personal enterprise of one individual. It has long ceased to serve as an organization of, by and for the swimming community. PASA has had no legitimate set of officers since 2005; its management and operations have been handled by one man who has deemed himself accountable to no one.

Mark Joseph has arrogated powers unto himself, which he abused to the detriment of coaches and athletes. Hundreds of PASA members have been disenfranchised either because of unwarranted suspensions. Others chose to leave and stay out of PASA, out of disgust with Joseph's underhandedness.

For the record, Mr. Joseph's victims never violated PASA Rules. In his efforts to exact blind allegiance among members, Joseph invoked FINA rules on “unauthorized relations” which actually referred to international bodies. He took these out of context and applied it to disqualify members who as much as associated with his perceived enemies.

Every attempt to correct the situation failed in the face of determined efforts by the Mr. Joseph to stay in power. There were many complaints against the so-called “disciplinary actions” meted on “erring” members, which he ignored. All suspensions were made unilaterally, in gross violation of PASA rules and in complete disregard of the sporting spirit behind swimming – and the young athletes’ right to compete over and above all considerations.

Calls for PASA elections were ignored. In 2008, the Save PASA Movement succeeded in proving the illegitimate status of Mark Joseph, prompting the POC Executive Board on June 17, 2008 to convene and look into the matter. In that meeting it was established by the Executive Board in no uncertain terms that Joseph violated the POC orders for him to call elections in PASA.

Fortunately for Mark Joseph – but unfortunately for the swimming community – he could rely on the politics within POC and his close association with POC president Peping Cojuangco, who himself has been booted out of his own equestrian association by disgusted members and is desperately clinging to his position.

Joseph has shamelessly refused to call for elections in PASA, and the POC under Cojuangco is tolerating it. We are held hostage by this unholy alliance and we are left with no recourse but to leave Joseph and the sorry mess he has created in PASA.

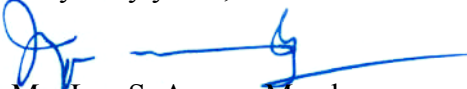
Finally, Mr. Joseph also stands accused of misappropriating millions of pesos collected by PASA. He has stubbornly brushed aside calls for an accounting of these funds as extensively reported in the national media.

As a matter of justice, the swimming community deserves an explanation of these accusations, but no, Mr. Joseph deems himself above these complaints. ASAP reiterates the call for Mark Joseph to step down and render an accounting of the millions of pesos in funding intended for PASA.

We need an institution that will transcend individual personalities and interests; that will oversee the development of swimming and other aquatic sports with a sound developmental program in place, as well as transparency and accountability before the swimming community.

Join us as we begin a new era in aquatic sports.

Very truly yours,



Ma. Luz S. Arzaga-Mendoza
President