This volume is a Festschrift for Arsenio Molina Balisacan – economist, professor, public servant, colleague, mentor and friend. It pays tribute to his work and honours him as an outstanding economist and public servant. Its themes reflect his research and policy interests over his professional career. These interests are central to understanding the development dynamics in the Philippines and elsewhere in Asia. The overarching theme is overcoming poverty through agricultural and rural development and complementary policies that engender a robust and sustainable structural transformation. Competition policy plays a particularly key role in combating cronyism and rent-seeking that impede that development path.

This project was conceived in November 2018 when the editors and the honouree attended the back-to-back Philippine Economic Society (PES) and the Federation of ASEAN Economic Associations (FAEA) conference held in Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines. We planned the surprise launch of this volume in time for his sixty-fifth birthday on 8 November 2022. In the Philippines, this age also marks an individual’s retirement from government service. Thus began the three-year “gentle conspiracy”, as Gerry Sicat aptly describes the project, among the editors, contributors, SEARCA and ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute towards the realization of this volume.

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