

FINAL

**OUR UNIVERSITIES: THE BATTLEFIELDS OF THE FUTURE**

**Remarks of H.E. President Fidel V. Ramos  
Acceptance of the University of Illinois  
Presidential Medal for Outstanding Achievement  
Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.  
November 11, 1993**

**INTRODUCTION**

I AM DEEPLY MOVED AND GRATEFUL FOR THIS HIGH HONOR THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CONFERS UPON ME.

THIS MEDAL OF ACHIEVEMENT HAS GREAT PERSONAL MEANING FOR ME BECAUSE IT WAS MY SPECIAL PRIVILEGE AND GOOD LUCK TO STUDY AND LEARN IN THIS GREAT UNIVERSITY AS A PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT SCHOLAR. TO STAND HERE TODAY, FOUR DECADES AFTER THAT WONDERFUL TIME IN MY YOUTH, TWO SEMESTERS AND ONE SUMMER SPENT IN THE HEART OF AMERICA IN SEARCH OF A MASTER'S DEGREE IN CIVIL ENGINEERING, IS TO RECAPTURE MANY HAPPY MEMORIES -- OF THE CHAMPAIGN-URBANA CAMPUS OF THIS UNIVERSITY, OF THE MANY FRIENDS WHO MADE MY STAY PRODUCTIVE AND JOYFUL, AND OF THE MANY MENTORS AND PROFESSORS WHO HELPED ME THROUGH MY STUDIES.

**THE TRANSCENDENT MEANING**

WE USUALLY THINK OF OUR WORLD IN TERMS OF NATIONS. BUT IN THE WORLD OF KNOWLEDGE, THERE ARE NO FRONTIERS AND NO NATIONALITIES. THE BIG TEN UNIVERSITIES FORM AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE VAST INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND SCHOLARSHIP, IN WHICH ALL SEEKERS OF KNOWLEDGE ARE MEMBERS.

WITHOUT THIS COMMUNITY OF LEARNING, WE WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO FIND THE THREADS OF COMMON INTEREST AND VALUES THAT UNITE THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD, AND OUR NATIONS WOULD BE HARD-PRESSED TO ACHIEVE THE HEIGHTS OF KNOWLEDGE THAT ALONE CAN ENABLE THEM TO WIN THE FUTURE.

TODAY, WE LIVE IN A TIME OF HIGH EXCITEMENT AND HOPE. THE WORLD WE KNEW AS STUDENTS IS FADING AWAY, AND A NEW ONE LOOMS ON THE HORIZON. TO MAKE THIS NEW WORLD OF THE COMING MILLENNIUM IN THE IMAGE OF OUR DREAMS, WE MUST TURN AGAIN TO THE BEST WITHIN OURSELVES. AND THE BEST, OFTEN THAN NOT, HAS COME FIRST AND FOREMOST FROM OUR INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING.

WE WORRY A LOT THESE DAYS ABOUT THE SHORTAGE OF MONEY FOR OUR UNDERTAKINGS. YET, IN TRUTH, WE MUST WORRY MORE ABOUT THE SHORTAGE OF HUMAN TALENT WHICH, IF LEFT UNFILLED, MEANS LOST OPPORTUNITIES.

IN BOTH RICH AND POOR NATIONS -- IN THE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD WORLDS -- THE STORY IS THE SAME. OUR LIVES CHANGE FOR THE BETTER TO THE EXTENT THAT OUR UNIVERSITIES, LABORATORIES AND THINK TANKS DISCOVER NEW KNOWLEDGE AND RENEW THE OLD, AND TO THE EXTENT THAT ALL ARE ABLE TO SHARE IN THE FRUITS OF MODERN CIVILIZATION.

**A NEW PHASE IN PHILIPPINE-U.S. RELATIONS**

AMONG THE IMPORTANT REASONS FOR MY VISITS TO MAJOR AMERICAN CITIES IS TO TELL AMERICAN BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL LEADERS ABOUT THE PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS NOW UNDERWAY IN THE PHILIPPINES. WITH AN ENHANCED DEMOCRACY AND AN ECONOMY POISED FOR TAKEOFF, THE PHILIPPINES NOW OFFERS MAJOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR AMERICAN COMPANIES AND INVESTORS, AND IS POTENTIALLY A GROWTH CENTER FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, WHICH IS THE FASTEST-GROWING REGION IN THE WORLD.

I AM CONFIDENT THE PHILIPPINES AND THE UNITED STATES WILL ALWAYS HAVE WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP. WE SHARE NEARLY ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF HISTORY. THIS CREATES UNIQUE BONDS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES.

BUT WE NEED TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE. THE PRINCIPAL FOUNDATION FOR OUR FUTURE RELATIONSHIP HAS SHIFTED TO OUR COMMON ECONOMIC CONCERNS -- TRADE, INVESTMENT AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER. THE UNITED STATES RECOGNIZES THAT ITS OWN PROSPERITY IS TIED TO THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF ASIAN ECONOMIES, AND WE FILIPINOS ARE DETERMINED TO BE PART OF THE ASIAN ECONOMIC MIRACLE. FOR AMERICA, THE PHILIPPINES CAN BE A GATEWAY INTO ASIA.

THROUGH OUR MEMBERSHIP IN ASEAN AND OUR GEOGRAPHICAL PROXIMITY AND CLOSE CULTURAL TIES TO CHINA, HONGKONG, TAIWAN AND OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES, WE OFFER AMERICAN INVESTORS A NATURAL Foothold IN THE REGION, AS WELL AS ACCESS TO OUR OWN GROWING MARKETS.

THE MAIN STRUGGLES OF THIS DECADE AND BEYOND WILL BE FOUGHT AGAINST POVERTY, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION, OVERPOPULATION, OPPRESSION AND INJUSTICE -- AND THE PRIMARY INSTRUMENTS WILL NO LONGER BE THE ARMS OF WAR BUT DIPLOMACY, FREE ENTERPRISE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES. THE NEW BATTLEFIELDS WILL BE IN ACADEME'S CAMPUSES, CORPORATE BOARDROOMS, FARMS AND FACTORIES, WHICH MUST BE HARMONIZED TO CREATE A BRIGHTER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL MANKIND.

IN ALL THESE, UNIVERSITIES LIKE ILLINOIS WILL LIKELY BE IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE EFFORT.

I THANK YOU FROM THE FULLNESS OF MY HEART, AND MAY THE GOOD LORD BLESS THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS COMMUNITY ALWAYS.

GOOD DAY AND MY BEST WISHES TO ALL.

28/02/2024-1:49 PM-NOR