

FINAL

LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

**Speech of H.E. President Fidel V. Ramos
Forum on "The 1998 Philippine President:
Qualifications, Mandate and Leadership
Perspectives for the Next Century" Organized
by the The Philippine Futuristics Society
Manila Polo Club, Makati City, Philippines
0900H 19 November 1996**

INTRODUCTION

THIS FORUM ON PHILIPPINE PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP ADDRESSES A CONCERN WIDELY SHARED IN OUR COUNTRY TODAY. EIGHTEEN MONTHS FROM NOW WE SHALL BE ELECTING OUR NEXT PRESIDENT -- THE LEADER WHO WILL LEAD US INTO THE 21ST CENTURY.

WHEN YOU ASK A POLITICIAN, HOWEVER -- EVEN AN INSTANT ONE LIKE MYSELF -- TO DESCRIBE THE DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES OF OUR NEXT PRESIDENT, YOU RUN THE RISK OF GETTING ONLY A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THAT PARTICULAR POLITICIAN SEES IN THE MIRROR EVERY MORNING.

AND I AM SURE SUCH EGOTISTIC SELF-PORTRAITURE IS NOT WHAT YOU IN THE PHILIPPINE FUTURISTICS SOCIETY HAD IN MIND, WHEN YOU ORGANIZED THIS FORUM.

I BELIEVE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PRESIDENT CANNOT BE DEFINED IN A VACUUM. IT IS THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEMS THE NEXT PRESIDENT MUST FACE THAT WILL DEFINE THOSE QUALITIES WE SHOULD NOW BE LOOKING FOR AMONG OUR SO-CALLED "PRESIDENTIABLES."

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE THAT DEFINES THE CHARACTER OF THE LEADER. HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES ESTABLISH THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURES ACT.

AS KARL MARX WROTE IN 1852:

"MEN MAKE THEIR OWN HISTORY, BUT THEY DO NOT MAKE IT IN CIRCUMSTANCES THEY THEMSELVES CHOOSE...."

IN THIS SPIRIT, I SHALL FOCUS MY REMARKS HERE ON WHAT I BELIEVE TO BE THE PECULIAR SET OF CHALLENGES, PROBLEMS AND CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WILL FACE THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION.

THE SHADOW OF THE FUTURE ON THE PRESENT

TO UNDERTAKE SUCH AN EXAMINATION IS TO EXAMINE WHAT ONE PHILOSOPHER HAS CALLED "THE SHADOW THAT THE FUTURE CASTS ON THE PRESENT."

TOMORROW HAS THE POWER OF SHAPING WHAT WE DO TODAY.

THIS IS NOT A CASE OF PREDICTING THE FUTURE -- AS FORTUNE TELLERS AND CRYSTAL GAZERS ARE WONT TO DO. THIS IS RATHER WHAT YOU OF THIS SOCIETY WOULD CALL "VISIONING" -- OF PREPARING AND LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE FUTURE -- BASED ON THE ASPIRATIONS AND HOPES WE ENTERTAIN AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS A NATION.

WE CAN ANTICIPATE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT BY THE TIME WE MARK THE CENTENNIAL OF OUR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE IN 1998, WE FILIPINOS WILL BE A NATION OF SOME 74 MILLION PEOPLE -- WITH A MEDIAN AGE OF ABOUT 20 YEARS.

WE MAY EXPECT ALSO THAT BY THE TURN OF THE CENTURY THE GLOBAL ECONOMY WILL BECOME EVEN MORE LIBERALIZED AND INTERCONNECTED -- AND THAT THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION WILL PLAY AN EVEN MORE DYNAMIC ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

WE MAY ALSO REASONABLY EXPECT THAT, BY MID-1998, OUR COUNTRY AND OUR PEOPLE SHOULD BE IN FULL STRIDE TOWARD MODERNIZATION -- HITTING CLOSE TO 8% PERCENT ANNUAL GNP GROWTH; GENERATING ABOUT 1.4 MILLION NEW JOBS ANNUALLY, WITH OPPORTUNITY, EQUITY AND DEVELOPMENT MUCH MORE EVENLY SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

OUR LABORS TODAY ARE SHAPING THE FUTURE

THE BROAD TRENDS SHAPING UP ON THE HORIZON ARE NOT DIFFICULT TO CHART, BECAUSE MUCH OF THE FUTURE IS BEING SHAPED BY OUR LABORS TODAY. THE CHALLENGES, PROBLEMS, AND OPPORTUNITIES ARISE NOT FROM IMPERSONAL FORCES, AS SOME BELIEVE, BUT MAINLY FROM HUMAN ACTION, HUMAN AMBITION, HUMAN INITIATIVE AND HUMAN SELF-INTEREST.

FIVE YEARS AGO, WHEN ALL WE COULD SEE WAS CRISIS, INSTABILITY, AND DECLINE ACROSS THE HORIZON, WE HAD A LESS SANGUINE VIEW OF THE FUTURE. TODAY, IT IS A DIFFERENT SETTING ALTOGETHER.

ONCE DISMISSED AS THE 'SICK MAN OF ASIA,' OUR COUNTRY TODAY -- BY DINT OF REFORM, RESOLVE AND POLITICAL WILL -- IS NOW HAILED THE NEWEST ASIAN TIGER CUB BY NEWSWEEK.

ONCE WRITTEN OFF AS A FAILED SHOWCASE OF DEMOCRACY IN ASIA, THE PHILIPPINES IS PROVING, IN THE WORDS OF THIS WEEK'S ECONOMIST, THAT "GROWTH AND DEMOCRACY CAN GO HAND-IN-HAND."

AND ONCE LABELED AS "A DAMAGED CULTURE" DOOMED TO ALWAYS TREAD THE SHALLOWS, OUR SOCIETY IS SHOWING A GREAT CAPACITY FOR REGENERATION AND RENEWAL.

THE CRUCIAL TASKS OF THE NEXT ROUND

THE CRUCIAL TASK OF THE NEXT ROUND IS HOW TO LEAD A NATION WHICH NOW HAS MORE TO LOSE THAN IT DID FOUR YEARS AGO.

I SEE FOUR PRINCIPAL CHALLENGES LOOMING AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE 21ST CENTURY:

FIRST, THE CHALLENGE OF CONTINUITY AND DURABILITY OF REFORM: WHICH IS ALSO THE CHALLENGE OF BUILDING AN EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE PHILIPPINE STATE;

SECOND, THE CHALLENGE OF GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS;

THIRD, THE CHALLENGE OF MASS POVERTY; AND,

FOURTH, THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY.

FOR A COUNTRY THAT HAS REGENERATED ITSELF THE HARD WAY, THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT CHALLENGE IS HOW TO ENSURE THE DURABILITY AND CONTINUITY OF REFORM.

WE CANNOT BLINK AWAY THE FACT THAT MANY OF OUR COUNTRYMEN -- AND OUR FRIENDS ABROAD -- WORRY THAT SUCCEEDING LEADERS COULD UNRAVEL OR DISMANTLE THE REFORMS THAT HAVE BEEN INSTITUTED, AND COULD BRING BACK THE OUTMODED POLICIES THAT HAD RETARDED OUR DEVELOPMENT.

NEITHER CAN WE IGNORE THE SKEPTICISM OF THOSE WHO SAY THAT WE HAVE MERELY BEEN LUCKY SO FAR, AND THAT, AT THE NEXT TURN OF THE WHEEL, WE SHALL BE ON THE DOWNSIDE OF THE BOOM-BUST CYCLE.

ONE WOULD THINK THAT, GIVEN OUR SUCCESS THROUGH LIBERALIZATION REFORMS AND MARKET-OPENING MEASURES, ALL OF US SHOULD CONCEDE BY NOW THE CORRECTNESS OF THE PATH THAT THE RAMOS ADMINISTRATION HAS TAKEN AND RESOLUTELY CONTINUES TO TAKE.

BUT IN FACT -- AS WE SEE ON THE EVE OF THE FOURTH APEC LEADERS' SUMMIT THAT THE PHILIPPINES IS HOSTING -- SOME OF OUR COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN ARE WAVING ONCE AGAIN THE FLAG OF INWARD-LOOKING NATIONALISM AND AN OBSOLESCENT KIND OF RADICALISM. OTHERS ARE YIELDING ANEW TO THE POPULIST TEMPTATION OF PROVIDING SUBSIDIES AND DOLE-OUTS THAT CREATE BUDGETARY DEFICITS, DISTORT PRICES AND DRAIN PUBLIC FUNDS NEEDED FOR HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURES.

AND STILL THERE ARE OTHERS FIGHTING A REAR-GUARD ACTION TO STOP OUR CAMPAIGN TO DISMANTLE MONOPOLIES AND CARTELS, AND CURE THE ENDEMIC MALADY OF TAX EVASION AND TAX FRAUD.

I SEE NO GREATER IMPERATIVE FOR ENSURING OUR MOMENTUM FOR SUSTAINED PROGRESS THAN THAT THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION SHOULD PROVIDE A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND CONTINUITY WITH THE POLICIES AND REFORMS THAT HAVE WORKED IN TURNING OUR COUNTRY AROUND.

THIS MEANS NOT ONLY MAINTAINING BUT ALSO BROADENING AND DEEPENING THE REFORMS WE HAVE ALREADY ENACTED INTO LAW AND BEGUN TO CARRY OUT. *THE TRUTH IS THAT WE HAVE BARELY SCRATCHED THE SURFACE OF REFORM.*

IF OUR COUNTRY IS TO ORGANIZE THE COMPETITIVE ECONOMY THAT WILL MOVE IT INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, THEN THE PHILIPPINE STATE MUST FIRST FREE ITSELF FROM THE GRIP OF PATRONAGE POLITICS AND ECONOMIC OLIGARCHIES. BASICALLY, OUR TASK IS TO COMPLETE THE TRANSFER OF POLICY INSTRUMENTS THAT STILL PROVIDE A WIDE AREA OF DISCRETION IN THE HANDS OF AUTHORITIES TO THE STATUS OF SELF-REGULATING AND SELF-SUSTAINING ECONOMIC POLICIES.

THIS MEANS MAKING THE WHOLE OF PUBLIC POLICY-MAKING TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE TO GOVERNMENT'S LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONSTITUENCIES.

CHALLENGE OF GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

THE SECOND AREA OF CHALLENGE HAS TO DO WITH BUILDING UP OUR COMPETITIVENESS IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY. ALL THE SIGNS AND EMERGING TRENDS POINT TO COMPETITIVENESS AS THE KEY FACTOR IN THE CREATION OF THE WEALTH OF NATIONS IN THE COMING CENTURY.

A VITAL TASK OF TOMORROW'S NATIONAL LEADERS IS HOW TO SUSTAIN COMPETITIVENESS WELL INTO THE NEXT CENTURY -- IN A WORLD WHERE OTHER ECONOMIES ARE CERTAIN TO ALSO BID FOR A PLACE OF ADVANTAGE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY.

THIS MEANS PRINCIPALLY THAT *WE MUST MAKE THE WHOLE OF NATIONAL SOCIETY AN EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE CREATOR OF WEALTH.*

IN AN ERA OF RAPID GLOBAL MOVEMENTS OF HUMAN RESOURCES, GOODS, CAPITAL, TECHNOLOGY AND SKILLS, WE FILIPINOS MUST RIDE THE GREAT WAVE OF GLOBALIZATION TO NATIONAL MODERNIZATION. THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION -- NO LESS THAN THE PRESENT ONE -- MUST BE COMMITTED TO THE GOAL OF GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS.

AND WE MUST BUILD OUR COUNTRY'S COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE *NOT* ON CHEAP LABOR DOING REPETITIVE AND MUSCULAR WORK *BUT* ON QUALITY SKILLS AND INNOVATION.

THERE CAN BE NO IFS AND BUTS ABOUT THIS, DESPITE ALL THE NOISE BEING RAISED BY THE DISCREDITED LEFT AGAINST GLOBALIZATION. AS PETER DRUCKER HAS OBSERVED:

"THE ONE UNAMBIGUOUS LESSON OF THE LAST 40 YEARS IS THAT INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN THE WORLD ECONOMY HAS BECOME THE KEY TO DOMESTIC ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY."

A TURNING AWAY FROM THE GLOBAL ECONOMY WILL BE A DISASTER FOR THE PHILIPPINES.

IF WE FAIL THE CHALLENGE OF COMPETITIVENESS, OUR COUNTRY WILL BE AGAIN RELEGATED TO THE BACKWATERS OF THE WORLD -- AND OUR COUNTRYMEN AND COUNTRYWOMEN IN DANGER OF BECOMING THE HEWERS OF WOOD AND DRAWERS OF WATER FOR MORE FORTUNATE PEOPLES.

ENABLING THE POOR TO CREATE THEIR OWN FREEDOM

THE THIRD CHALLENGE HAS TO DO WITH THE CHALLENGE OF POVERTY. AND THIS IS THE MOST DIFFICULT STRUGGLE -- THE STRUGGLE WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE.

THE FAILED POLICIES OF THE PAST STILL AFFECT OUR PEOPLE AND OUR SOCIETY PROFOUNDLY.

WHILE THE NUMBERS OF OUR PEOPLE WHO WORK ABROAD HAS DECLINED AND MANY *BALIKBAYAN'S* HAVE DECIDED TO RETURN TO THE PHILIPPINES BECAUSE OF BETTER CONDITIONS AT HOME, STILL THOUSANDS OF OTHERS LOOK FOR A PRECARIOUS LIVING IN FOREIGN LANDS.

MILLIONS OF OUR FARMERS AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS -- AND THEIR FAMILIES -- CONTINUE TO LIVE HAND-TO-MOUTH.

THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ECONOMY HAS HELPED TO REDUCE POVERTY INCIDENCE FROM OVER 40 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION TO ABOUT 35% TODAY.

AND THE FACT THAT THE ECONOMY IS NOW GENERATING MORE THAN A MILLION JOBS A YEAR HAS ALREADY BROUGHT DOWN UNEMPLOYMENT TO ABOUT 7% AS OF THE MIDDLE OF THIS YEAR.

IT CANNOT BE DOUBTED THAT OUR GROWTH TODAY IS TOUCHING MORE AND MORE OF OUR PEOPLE. THOSE WHO SAY THAT GROWTH IS ONLY BENEFITING PEOPLE AT THE TOP ARE DEAD WRONG -- BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT COGNIZANT OF THE ACTION AND INTERACTION TAKING PLACE IN MORE THAN 40 GROWTH CENTERS AROUND THE COUNTRY. LOW-INCOME GROUPS ARE ALSO BENEFITING, AS GROWTH SPREADS ACROSS INDUSTRIES AND INTO AGRICULTURE -- AND AS DEVELOPMENT SPREADS INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE, RAISING EVER-EXPANDING POLYGONS OF GROWTH IN ITS WAKE.

BUT EVEN SO, NOT EVERYONE HAS BEEN BROUGHT INTO THE AMBIT OF GROWTH. WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE WE CAN WIPE OUT PHILIPPINE POVERTY.

THE VITAL GOAL -- IN ESSENCE -- IS TO GIVE ORDINARY PEOPLE A STAKE IN OUR COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT.

WE MUST HELP THE FILIPINO POOR HELP THEMSELVES -- SO THAT THEY CAN TAKE COMMAND OF THEIR LIVES, AND CREATE THEIR OWN FREEDOM.

FOR THIS REASON, I AM FIRM IN MY CONVICTION THAT THE SOCIAL REFORM AGENDA (SRA) OF THIS ADMINISTRATION MUST EXTEND INTO FUTURE ADMINISTRATIONS.

WE CANNOT AFFORD TO SLACKEN OUR EFFORTS IN ENHANCING SOCIAL EQUITY.

WE MUST KEEP OUR EYES -- OUR MINDS -- AND OUR HEARTS -- FOCUSED ON THE PROBLEM OF PHILIPPINE POVERTY.

DEVELOPING AS A DEMOCRACY

FINALLY, I WILL UNDERSCORE THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF OUR COUNTRY'S CONTINUING TO DEVELOP AS A DEMOCRACY -- THROUGH POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL REFORM.

WE HAVE DEVELOPED A FINE TRADITION OF RESPECT FOR THE OBLIGATIONS AND THE LIMITS OF POWER. BUT WE CAN HARDLY BE COMPLACENT ABOUT OUR DEMOCRACY SIMPLY BECAUSE WE ARE ONE OF THE FEW ASIAN COUNTRIES WHERE DEMOCRACY IS THRIVING.

WE STILL HAVE AN UPHILL CLIMB -- BEFORE WE CAN BECOME A TRULY MATURE DEMOCRACY.

I SEE AS A MAJOR TASK FOR GOVERNMENT IN THE COMING YEARS THE STRENGTHENING OF THE FABRIC OF LAW AND ORDER; THE MODERNIZATION OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR POLITICS INTO ONE THAT IS PROBLEM-SOLVING ORIENTED -- AND NOT ONE THAT IS BASED ON POPULARITY OR POPULISM.

AS A FREE SOCIETY, WE ARE TESTED ON MANY FRONTS BY THOSE WHO USE TERROR; COMMIT CRIME; OR TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CIVIL LIBERTIES TO WEAKEN THE DEFENSES OF OUR REPUBLIC.

IN OUR ANXIETY TO AVOID AUTHORITARIAN EXCESS, WE OFTENTIMES ABDICATE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO UPHOLD THE LAW.

IF WE ARE GOING TO FULLY MEET THE THREATS OF CRIME, TERRORISM AND DISORDER, WE MUST RESTORE THE *AUTHORITY* OF THE LAW.

SIMILARLY, OUR ELECTORAL SYSTEM IS IN GREAT NEED OF REFORM AND MODERNIZATION. WHILE OUR PEOPLE'S HIGH RATE OF PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS IS A CAUSE FOR PRIDE, THE SYSTEM'S VULNERABILITY TO FRAUD CRIES OUT FOR REFORM.

THE 1998 ELECTIONS WILL BE THE START OF A MAJOR MODERNIZATION EFFORT, WHICH WE MUST CONTINUE TO PURSUE UNTIL OUR PROCESSES CAN FULLY MATCH THE SYSTEMS AND CAPABILITIES OF THE WORLD'S ADVANCED DEMOCRACIES.

FINALLY, WE MUST LOOK TOWARD THE BUILDING OF A STABLE POLITICAL CONSENSUS. TO SUSTAIN OUR DEVELOPMENT MOMENTUM, WE NEED A POLITICAL MAJORITY THAT CAN DEFINE, APPLY AND IMPLEMENT POLICIES FOR GROWTH AND EQUITY.

TODAY, WE ARE ILL-SERVED BY A PARTY SYSTEM BASED ON PERSONALIST AND OPPORTUNISTIC ALLIANCES -- A SYSTEM THAT DOES NOT PROFESS THE POLITICS OF CONVICTION.

IT IS REMARKABLE THAT, IN SPITE OF THIS, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CRAFT SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S GOALS AND PROGRAMS IN CONGRESS.

ENTERING THE POLITICS OF 1998, I BELIEVE IT TIME FOR US TO MOLD A TRULY COHESIVE POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM COMMITTED TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT -- TO SECURING A STABLE MAJORITY AND MANDATE IN CONGRESS AND THE EXECUTIVE -- AND TO ADOPTING PARTY GOVERNMENT AS THE KEY TO GOVERNANCE IN THE FUTURE.

POLITICAL MATURITY DEMANDS THAT WE EXCHANGE THE POLITICS OF PERSONALITY FOR THE POLITICS OF CONVICTION.

THE RECURRENCE OF HISTORY

AS A PEOPLE, WHAT SHOULD WORRY US IS NOT "THE END OF HISTORY" -- WHICH FRANCIS FUKUYAMA HAS SUGGESTED -- BUT "THE RECURRENCE OF HISTORY."

WE MUST ENSURE THAT HISTORY AND ALL ITS SORROWS DO NOT RECUR IN OUR COUNTRY.

MABINI ONCE REMARKED THE FILIPINO NATION WAS BORN IN PAIN. THE EXECUTION OF OUR HEROES - - FROM FATHERS GOMEZ, BURGOS AND ZAMORA TO RIZAL -- ENABLED OUR PEOPLE TO REALIZE THE TRAGEDY OF THEIR CONDITION FOR THE FIRST TIME. SIMILARLY, OUR ECONOMIC TURNAROUND HAS BEEN WROUGHT IN CRISIS AND HARDSHIP FOR THE MASSES OF OUR PEOPLE.

FROM THE DEPTHS OF STAGNATION THAT WE HAD SANK INTO, WE FINALLY SAW THE CORROSIVE POLICIES THAT HAD BROUGHT US DOWN AND KEPT US BACKWARD. FEELING THE DEPRIVATION AND THE SHAME, WE FINALLY SUMMONED THE WILL TO EFFECT REFORM; AND UNLEASH THE ENERGIES OF OUR PEOPLE FOR DEVELOPMENT.

THE SAME MAY BE ALSO SAID OF THE PEACE WE HAVE FORGED IN MINDANAO.

ON THE ANVIL OF STRIFE AND THE LONG HISTORY OF SEPARATION OF OUR CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, WE HAVE FASHIONED A RECONCILIATION THAT ENABLES US TO STAND UNITED FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE THRESHOLD OF TRUE NATIONHOOD.

FOR THE FIRST TIME WE FILIPINOS -- MUSLIMS, KATUTUBOS AND CHRISTIANS -- ARE TRULY BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

THESE ARE PRECIOUS LESSONS LEARNED AT GREAT COST TO OUR COUNTRY. I WOULD TRUST THAT THE NEXT PRESIDENT WILL JEALOUSLY NURTURE THIS INHERITANCE AND GUARD AGAINST THE REPETITION OF HISTORY.

WE MUST NEVER RETURN TO THE TIME WHEN WE WERE A NATION OF TRIBES AND FACTIONS -- EACH GROUP MARCHING TO ITS OWN HOLLOW DRUMBEAT.

CONCLUSION: THE LEADER AND THE TIME

LET US NOW SUMMARIZE AND CONCLUDE.

THE NEED FOR A "FIT" BETWEEN THE LEADER AND THE TIME IS A RECURRING MOTIF IN HISTORY -- BECAUSE LEADERS FOR ALL SEASONS ARE ALL TOO RARE.

WINSTON CHURCHILL WAS PERHAPS THE GREATEST OF WARTIME LEADERS. YET, ONCE PEACE WAS RESTORED, HE SEEMED OUT OF STEP WITH HIS OWN COUNTRYMEN.

IN THE ONCE COLONIZED COUNTRIES, WE HAVE SEEN THE SAME THEME PLAYED AGAIN AND AGAIN. THE LEADERS WHO LED THE SUCCESSFUL WARS FOR INDEPENDENCE OFTEN PROVED LESS THAN ABLE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR MODERNIZATION. AND IT FELL ON OTHERS TO LEAD THE WAY TO PROGRESS.

IN 1998, WE FILIPINOS NEED TO FIND A GOOD MATCH BETWEEN THE LEADER WHO WOULD LEAD US AND THE TIMES DAWNING UPON OUR COUNTRY.

I AM OF COURSE BIASED TOWARDS A LEADERSHIP IN 1998 THAT WILL ACHIEVE THE BROADENING AND DEEPENING OF THE GAINS OF MY OWN PRESIDENCY. WHERE OTHERS MAY LOOK FOR A FRESH START, I SEE THE IMPERATIVE TO CONSOLIDATE AND BUILD ON WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR -- FOR THERE IS NO ADVANTAGE IN GOING BACK TO SQUARE ONE.

WHERE OTHERS MAY COUNSEL A CHANGE OF POLICY, I ADVOCATE DEFENSE OF WHAT WE HAVE GAINED AND THE FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF OUR COMPETITIVENESS.

BUT IT IS NOT OUT OF VANITY THAT I ADVOCATE THE CONTINUITY OF PUBLIC POLICY. WE HAVE TAKEN GREAT STRIDES AS A NATION UNDER OUR REFORMS AND OUR LEADERSHIP -- AND IT WOULD BE FOOLISH FOR US TO CHANGE COURSE.

WE HAVE ALSO WON POLITICAL CREDIBILITY -- HERE AT HOME AND ABROAD -- BECAUSE OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE THESE PAST FOUR YEARS.

IT IS NOW WELL RECOGNIZED THAT POLITICAL CREDIBILITY IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONS.

LEADERS -- I SUBMIT -- SOLVE PROBLEMS; THEY DO NOT EXPLOIT THEM. THEY DEFINE ISSUES; THEY DO NOT WORSEN THEM.

THE POLITICIAN WHO CRIES OUT LOUDLY THAT UNEMPLOYMENT IS DEPLORABLE, OR THAT GRAFT AND CORRUPTION ARE BAD, IS TELLING US NOTHING; AND HE OR SHE ARE JUST PIED PIPERS AND WILL HARDLY INSPIRE CONFIDENCE AMONG OUR PEOPLE AND OUR FRIENDS ABROAD.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP -- LEADERSHIP THAT UNITES FOR ACTION -- IS THE VITAL KEY FOR THE PHILIPPINES IN THE 21ST CENTURY. AND IT IS "THE THOUGHTFUL, IMAGINATIVE, AND EFFECTIVE USE OF POWER THAT SEPARATES LEADERS *FROM* OFFICIALS WHO ARE MERELY IN AUTHORITY."

IF WE FILIPINOS CHOOSE BADLY, WE MAY WIND UP REPEATING HISTORY.

BUT IF WE FILIPINOS CHOOSE WISELY, WE CAN WIN THE FUTURE.

THANK YOU AND *MABUHAY!*

01/03/2024-10:58 PM-NOR/JOJO