

**Speech of President Fidel V. Ramos
Asean Ministers Meeting
July 17, 1992**

ON BEHALF OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, I AM PLEASED TO WELCOME THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS AND THEIR DISTINGUISHED GUESTS TO THIS 25TH MINISTERIAL MEETING.

THAT ASEAN HAS SURVIVED -- AND PROSPERED --AS OUR INSTRUMENT OF REGIONAL COOPERATION GRATIFIES ME IN A PERSONAL AS WELL AS IN AN OFFICIAL -- WAY.

AS SOME OF YOU MAY KNOW, MY FATHER -- AS FOREIGN SECRETARY OF THE PHILIPPINES -- WAS ONE OF ASEAN'S FOUNDING PARENTS, TOGETHER WITH ADAM MALIK OF INDONESIA, TUN RAZAK OF MALAYSIA, RAJARATNAM OF SINGAPORE, AND THANAT KHOMAN OF THAILAND.

AS THE SECOND-GENERATION RAMOS IN ASEAN, I AM FORTUNATE TO BE ABLE TO HELP CARRY ON -- IN HOWEVER SMALL A

WAY -- THIS NOBLE WORK THAT MY FATHER AND HIS COLLEAGUES BEGAN IN AUGUST 1967.

THIS EARLY, I HAVE MADE UP MY MIND THAT, AFTER MY MOST URGENT HOMEWORK IS DONE, MY VERY FIRST STATE VISIT SHALL BE TO AN ASEAN CAPITAL.

THE PROMISE OF REGIONAL PEACE YOUR PREDECESSORS PURSUED 25 YEARS AGO HAS BECOME A REALITY. AS THEY FORESAW, ASEAN HAS PROVED TO BE A STABILIZING INFLUENCE -- MOST NOTABLY IN INDOCHINA -- AS WELL AS AN EFFECTIVE COUNTERPOISE TO BIG-POWER AMBITION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

ASEAN'S BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE IS CONFIRMED BY WHAT I UNDERSTAND IS TO BE ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS MEETING IN MANILA -- THE ACCESSION OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM AND THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC TO THE TREATY OF AMITY AND COOPERATION SIGNED IN BALI IN 1976.

IN ECONOMIC TERMS, OUR REGION'S DYNAMIC PEOPLES, ITS RICH RESOURCES, AND ITS HIGH GROWTH RATES HAVE WON ASEAN A

LARGE MEASURE OF RESPECT EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD. OUR REGION IS RECOGNIZED AS A POWERHOUSE OF INDUSTRY, TECHNOLOGY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ABILITY IN THE PACIFIC BASIN.

GENTLEMEN AND LADIES OF THE 25TH MINISTERIAL MEETING: ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, YOU CERTAINLY HAVE A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW!

A SEASON OF GRACE IN ASEAN

CONSOLE YOURSELF WITH THE THOUGHT THAT YOU MEET AT A GOOD TIME:

THE THAW IN THE COLD WAR HAS GENERATED ITS OWN SEASON OF GRACE IN OUR PART OF THE WORLD.

IN AFGHANISTAN, IN INDOCHINA, AND EVEN ON THE 38TH PARALLEL, WE HAVE RECENTLY SEEN SOME WELCOME WARMING OF ATTITUDES ONCE SEEMINGLY FROZEN IN PERMAFROST HOSTILITY.

OF COURSE THERE ARE POTENTIAL FLASHPOINTS -- LIKE THE SPRATLEYS -- WHICH REMAIN. BUT DISPUTES LIKE THIS ALWAYS CROP

UP AMONG NEIGHBOR-COUNTRIES -- IF THEY DON'T, THEN GOVERNMENTS WOULD HAVE NO NEED FOR FOREIGN MINISTERS: I TRUST (AS I'M SURE THE OTHER HEADS OF STATE DO) THAT RESOLVING THEM IS NOT BEYOND YOUR COLLECTIVE INGENUITY.

LET ME JUST SAY I HOPE -- I BELIEVE -- THAT THE REGIONAL ATMOSPHERE EVOLVING WILL GIVE ALL OUR COUNTRIES SOME LEISURE TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS AT HOME.

WHAT WE FILIPINOS ARE TRYING TO DO

WE FILIPINOS ARE DETERMINED TO USE THIS BREATHING SPELL TO SHED THE SOCIAL WEAKNESSES THAT HAVE MADE US WHAT OUR MORE COLORFUL JOURNALISTS CALL "THE SICK MAN OF SOUTHEAST ASIA."

WE ARE WORKING TO RESTORE OUR ECONOMY AND OUR DEMOCRACY -- BOTH OF WHICH WERE DEVASTATED BY 13 YEARS OF STRONGMAN RULE -- AND TO EASE THE POVERTY THAT OPPRESSES SO MANY OF OUR PEOPLE.

IN THE PROCESS, WE FILIPINOS ARE RELEARNING SOME BASIC

TRUTHS ABOUT THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY.

AND THE SUM OF THESE IS THAT CIVIC LIFE IN A DEMOCRACY IS A CONSTANT GIVE-AND-TAKE BETWEEN OPPOSING POINTS OF VIEW AND CENTERS OF INTERMEDIATE POWER. NO ONE FACTION OR ONE IDEOLOGY MAY MONOPOLIZE POWER BY VIOLENCE OR COERCION. AND NOBODY HAS A MONOPOLY OF THE TRUTH.

IN FACT WE'VE JUST COME THROUGH A GENERAL ELECTION WHICH CONFIRMED THAT THE CIVIL LIBERTIES WE HAD WON FOR OURSELVES SIX YEARS AGO ARE ALIVE AND WELL.

MY NEW GOVERNMENT'S FIRST CONCERN IS TO RESTORE CIVIL ORDER -- FOR WITHOUT STABILITY OUR ECONOMY CANNOT RETURN TO GROWTH.

AFTER 22 YEARS, OUR RADICAL INSURGENCY IS AT LAST WINDING DOWN. THE FULLTIME GUERRILLAS OF THE SO-CALLED NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY ARE DOWN TO 13,480 FROM A PEAK OF 25,800 IN 1988; AND THE VILLAGES THEY INFLUENCE ARE DOWN TO 2,819, FROM 8,496 IN 1986.

EVEN SO, THE INSURGENCY EACH YEAR STILL EXTRACTS FROM US TOO MUCH IN BLOOD AND TREASURE: THIS IS WHY WE'RE LOOKING FOR A PEACEFUL, ONCE-AND-FOR-ALL SETTLEMENT NOT ONLY WITH OUR INSURGENTS BUT ALSO WITH OUR MUTINOUS OFFICERS AND OUR SEPARATISTS IN PORTIONS OF MINDANAO AND SULU.

WE HAVE ALSO TAKEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR OWN EXTERNAL SECURITY -- WITH ALL THAT DECISION IMPLIES IN BELT-TIGHTENING AND SELF-SACRIFICE, TO RAISE OUR ARMED FORCES' CAPABILITY TO DEFEND OUR BORDERS.

I ASSURE YOU -- OUR REGIONAL FRIENDS AND PARTNERS -- THAT WE FILIPINOS WILL NOT BE A CHARGE ON THE ASEAN COMMUNITY: WE ARE PREPARED IN EVERY WAY TO ACCOUNT FOR OURSELVES.

OUR VIEW OF REGIONAL STABILITY

OUR RADICAL INSURGENTS HAD LOOKED FORWARD TO A WORLD REVOLUTION TO WHICH THEIR OWN PROTRACTED REBELLION COULD RELATE.

A REVOLUTION DID BREAK OUT THROUGHOUT THE GLOBE. BUT IT

IS A REVOLUTION NOT OF THE BUREAUCRATIC STATE, BUT OF THE INDIVIDUAL SPIRIT.

EVERYWHERE WE HAVE BEEN SEEING THE IMMENSE POLITICAL POWER -- THE MORAL AUTHORITY -- THAT ORDINARY PEOPLE CAN EXERT, JUST BY STANDING TOGETHER FOR THEIR LIGHTS.

I BELIEVE WE ARE AT A NEW AGE OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION -- THE AGE OF PEOPLE POWER.

PEOPLE EVERYWHERE ARE NO LONGER CONTENT TO BE BYSTANDERS IN THE UNFOLDING OF THEIR COUNTRY'S HISTORY.

WE IN ASEAN HAVE BEEN WISE TO WELCOME DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN EVERY ASPECT OF NATIONAL LIFE, FOR IT IS THE BEDROCK OF NATIONAL -- AND THEREFORE OF REGIONAL STABILITY.

THE POLITICS OF WORLD TRADE

APART FROM INCREASING TRADE AMONG OURSELVES, SECURING CONTINUED ACCESS TO WESTERN MARKETS AND TECHNOLOGY MUST NOW BECOME THE MOST VITAL -- AND COMMON -- CONCERN OF

OURSELVES AND OUR REGIONAL PARTNERS.

THIS CONCERN WE CAN BEST EXPRESS COOPERATIVELY THROUGH ASEAN AND SIMILAR SUPRANATIONAL GROUPINGS IN OUR CONTINENT.

FOR THE DANGER IS REAL THAT, IN WORLD AFFAIRS, TRADE WILL REPLACE WAR AS THE CONTINUATION OF POLITICS BY OTHER MEANS.

WE MUST ALSO DO ALL WE CAN TO ENSURE THAT THE NEW WORLD ORDER DOES NOT RESULT IN A RESURGENCE OF NARROW NATIONALISMS; THAT MANY SMALL CONFLICTS DO NOT REPLACE THE SINGLE BIG ONE.

FOR THE EAST ASIAN REGION, OUR OBVIOUS RESORT IS TO TRY AND ARRANGE AMONG OURSELVES AN INTERNAL BALANCE OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POWER SUFFICIENT TO INSURE OUR COLLECTIVE STABILITY AND PEACE -- AN INTERNAL BALANCE THAT WILL NOT REQUIRE THE GUARANTEE OF OUTSIDE POWERS.

IN THIS NEW BALANCE OF POWER, JAPAN, CHINA, INDONESIA, AND AUSTRALIA WILL NECESSARILY HAVE A LARGE ROLE.

WE IN ASEAN MUST ALSO STRENGTHEN OUR SUPPORT FOR THE UNITED NATIONS AND ITS POLITICAL-ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTALITIES.

NOT ONLY IS THE WORLD ORGANIZATION THE LOGICAL AUTHORITY TO KEEP OPEN THE CHANNELS OF WORLD TRADE. AS A MECHANISM FOR COOPERATION AMONG THE BIG POWERS, THE UNITED NATIONS IS BOUND TO HAVE A BIGGER ROLE IN PEACEKEEPING AND IN THE RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES BETWEEN NATIONS.

GATHERING OUR COUNTRIES TOGETHER

OVER THE PAST QUARTER OF A CENTURY, ASEAN HAS GATHERED OUR COUNTRIES TOGETHER -- LIKE RICE STALKS IN A SHEAF AT HARVEST TIME -- IN COMMON ACTION TO ACCELERATE THE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF OUR REGION, ON A SPIRIT OF EQUALITY AND FRIENDSHIP.

IN DOING SO ASEAN HAS MERELY CONFIRMED SOUTHEAST ASIA'S ANCIENT SENSE OF UNITY -- IN ETHNICITY, CULTURE, AND ASPIRATION.

LET US MOVE ON TOGETHER ON THIS HISTORIC JOURNEY WE HAVE EMBARKED ON -- TO ATTAIN THE FULLNESS OF FREEDOM, PEACE

AND PROSPERITY FOR OURSELVES AND OUR POSTERITY.

MABUHAY ANG ASEAN; AT MABUHAY KAYONG LAHAT!

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