

THE *PHILIPPINE AGENDA 21*:
REAFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENTS TO THE EARTH SUMMIT

**Speech of H.E. President Fidel V. Ramos National Workshop
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INTRODUCTION

I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THIS
CONFERENCE THAT HAS BEEN ORGANIZED IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE
HISTORIC EARTH SUMMIT IN RIO DE JANEIRO LAST JUNE ● AND I
MUST THANK YOU ALSO FOR ALLOWING ME THE LAST WORD IN THIS
MEETING ●

ON THE EVE OF THAT HISTORIC SUMMIT, I REMEMBER READING
THESE WORDS OF ONE OF ITS PRIME MOVERS, MR. FELIX DODDS ●
SAID HE: "WHATEVER HAPPENS IN RIO, IT WILL CHANGE OUR LIVES

FOREVER ● THIS MAY BE THE BEST, THE LAST CHANCE, TO SAVE THE
EARTH ● "

IT IS NOT FOR ME TO JUDGE HOW THE SUMMIT HAS CHANGED
THE LIVES OF EVERYONE ● OR HOW FAR THE SUMMIT MOVED THE
WORLD TOWARD ITS AMBITIOUS GOALS ● THAT I WILL LEAVE TO THE
EXPERTS ●

BUT THIS I CAN SAY ● THE RIO SUMMIT HAS CHANGED AND
REFINED THE PERSPECTIVES FROM WHICH I PERSONALLY VIEW OUR
OWN FUTURE AS A NATION ● AND SO FAR AS I AM ABLE, MY
ADMINISTRATION WILL ASSIGN THE HIGHEST PRIORITY ATTENTION TO
ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS IN OUR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM ●

NOW MORE THAN EVER, WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE SUBSTANCE,
AND NOT JUST THE RHETORIC, OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ● THIS
I PLEDGE ●

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

FOR MANY YEARS, THE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF OUR
NATURAL HERITAGE HAD BEEN A CAUSE IN SEARCH OF AUTHENTIC
PUBLIC CONSENSUS AND GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT ● WHILE A
SENSE OF ALARM HAD LONG BEEN RIFE IN THE COUNCILS OF
ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND SOME GOVERNMENT BODIES, THE
MAJORITY OF OUR PEOPLE HAD BEEN DISPOSED TO REGARD IT AS A
SECONDARY ISSUE -- SECONDARY TO THE PRIMORDIAL CHALLENGES OF
BUILDING UP THE NATIONAL ECONOMY, ERADICATING MASS POVERTY,
AND SECURING ORDER AND PEACE IN OUR COUNTRY ●

TODAY WE KNOW BETTER ● BY YOUR ACTIVISM AND YOUR

CARING, YOU IN THE ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT HAVE ALTERED PUBLIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE ISSUE -- PUSHING PUBLIC POLICY TOWARD NEW DIRECTIONS AND BUSINESS TOWARD GREATER AWARENESS OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE ENVIRONMENT ● AND WHERE YOUR CONSTANT BADGERING COULD NOT PRY OPEN PUBLIC INDIFFERENCE TO THE DANGERS, NATURAL CATAclysms THAT VISITED THE COUNTRY IN RECENT YEARS HAVE OPENED EYES IN A WAY THAT HAD NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE ●

AT RIO DE JANEIRO, WE WERE MADE CONSCIOUS OF THE FACT THAT SAVING THE ENVIRONMENT IS A CAUSE THAT ENGAGES THE ENTIRE FAMILY OF MAN ● THE SUMMIT MADE MEMORABLY PLAIN THAT MANKIND IS NOT FACED WITH A CHOICE BETWEEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT; THAT INDEED THE ONLY SANE CHOICE IS A DEVELOPMENT COURSE THAT IS ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY AND SUSTAINABLE OVER THE LONG TERM ●

MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, THE EARTH SUMMIT FORGED A CONSENSUS AMONG NATIONS -- RICH AND POOR, DEVELOP AND DEVELOPING ALIKE -- TO WORK TOGETHER IN FACING UP TO THE ENVIRONMENT CHALLENGE IN OUR TIME ● AND THERE IS NOW THE PROMISE THAT WE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD CAN RECEIVE SOME ASSISTANCE IN OUR EFFORTS TO COMBAT POVERTY AND PROTECT AND CONSERVE OUR NATURAL HERITAGE AT THE SAME TIME ●

THIS IS THE BROAD BACKGROUND TO THIS CONFERENCE ● AND OURS NOW IS THE TASK OF TRANSLATING THESE LESSONS AND EXPERIENCES INTO A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF ACTION HERE IN OUR COUNTRY ●

AN AGENDA FOR ACTION

TO MEET THIS NEED, I WILL STRESS THE HIGH IMPORTANCE OF BRINGING WITHIN THE AMBIT OF OUR CONCERNS ALL THE PROBLEMS

AND ISSUES PERTINENT TO FRAMING OUR AGENDA ● FOR WE CAN ONLY SUCCEED IN MEETING OUR COMMITMENT AND STAKES IN AGENDA 21 AS FORMULATED AT THE EARTH SUMMIT BY INTERPRETING THEM IN THE LIGHT OF OUR SPECIFIC SITUATION -- THE CONSTELLATION OF NEEDS, CONCERNS AND PROBLEMS THAT DEFINE THE CHALLENGE WHERE WE LIVE AND WORK ●

WITHOUT A DOUBT, THE RISKS ARISING FROM ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE ACUTE FOR OUR COUNTRY THAN THEY ARE TODAY ● BUT THEN IT IS ALSO A FACT THAT MOST OF OUR PEOPLE ARE ENGAGED IN A DAY-TO-DAY STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL THAT DRIVES THEM TO DESTROY THE NATURAL RESOURCES ON WHICH THEIR OWN FUTURE DEPENDS ● AT THE SAME TIME, OUR HEAVY DEBT BURDEN, TRADE BARRIERS, AND GLOBAL RECESSION HAVE DEPRIVED US OF THE FUNDS REQUIRED TO REVITALIZE THE ECONOMIC

AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT WE SO DESPERATELY NEED ●

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AS A WAY TO BALANCE THE CLAIMS OF ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS CLEARLY THE WAY TO GO ● BUT IT IS AN IDEA THAT EACH COUNTRY MUST FORMULATE IN ITS OWN FASHION ● THE THEORY PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK ● REALITIES DEFINE HOW WE CAN TRANSLATE THEORY INTO PRACTICE ●

WE MUST MOVE BEYOND SLOGANS TO SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND POLICIES THAT CAN RESULT IN CHANGE ● BECAUSE OUR PAST EFFORTS HAVE BEEN INADEQUATE, WE MUST DO MUCH MORE IF WE ARE TO MEET OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE FUTURE ●

LET ME THEREFORE INDICATE HERE THE BROAD THRUSTS WHICH

WE ARE RESOLVED TO PURSUE ●

FIRST, I BELIEVE THAT OUR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM MUST EMPHASIZE THE BELIEF THAT ECONOMIC GROWTH CAN BE VITALIZED ALONGSIDE SUSTAINABILITY ● OUR POLICIES WILL REFLECT THIS CONVICTION ● AND WE WILL INTEGRATE ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS IN NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING ●

SECOND, I BELIEVE WE MUST ONCE AND FOR ALL ACCEPT THE BASIC PREMISE UNDERLINED IN AGENDA 21, THAT "THE SERIOUS IMBALANCES THAT TODAY THREATEN THE SUSTAINABILITY OF BOTH OUR ECONOMY AND OUR ENVIRONMENT HAVE ARISEN PRIMARILY FROM OUR PERVASIVE AND PROLIFERATING POPULATION GROWTH ●"

FOR TOO LONG WE HAVE PAID LIP SERVICE TO THE ISSUE ● NOW IS THE TIME TO FACE IT -- BY IMPLEMENTING AN EARNEST FAMILY PLANNING

PROGRAM THAT WILL PROVIDE OUR PEOPLE ROOM FOR CHOICE IN
PLANNING THEIR FAMILIES ●

THIRD, I BELIEVE WE MUST REORIENT BUSINESS PRINCIPLES AND
ACTIVITIES FORWARD TOWARD AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND
FUTURE ● TO QUOTE THE MEMORABLE WORDS OF THE HEAD OF THE
PIONEERING BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,
MR. STEPHEN SCHMIDHEINY: "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS ABOUT
REDEFINING THE RULES OF THE ECONOMIC GAME ● BUSINESS LEADERS
NEED TO PARTICIPATE IN DEVISING RULES, STRIVING TO MAKE THEM
SIMPLE, PRACTICAL AND EFFICIENT ● THERE (ARE) OBVIOUS LIMITS AS
TO WHAT IMPACT WE WOULD ACCEPT ON THE ENVIRONMENT MADE
BY FUTURE GROWTH ●" OUR OWN BUSINESS LEADERS MUST
RECOGNIZE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IN THE NEW SCHEME OF THINGS ●

FOURTH, I BELIEVE WE MUST EMPHASIZE THE HIGH IMPORTANCE OF EFFICIENT USE OF OUR RESOURCES ● FOR TOO LONG WE HAVE BEEN PREDATORY IN OUR EXTRACTION OF THE BOUNTY OF OUR LAND, FORESTS AND SEAS ● NOW, WE MUST PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE NATURAL UNITY OF ALL THESE RESOURCES IN SUSTAINING US -- OUR LAND AND FRESH WATER RESOURCES, OUR ENERGY SOURCES, OUR FRAGILE ECOSYSTEMS LIKE ISLANDS AND MOUNTAINS ● NO MORE SHOULD WE PERMIT THE POLICY OF EXTRACTING PROFITS TODAY AT THE EXPENSE OF TOMORROW ●

FIFTH AND FINALLY, I BELIEVE IN THE GOAL SO WONDERFULLY INSCRIBED IN AGENDA 21: THE IDEA OF "A PEOPLE'S WORLD ●" IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, THE SUCCESS OF A PROGRAM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RESTS ON THE PARTICIPATION AND SENSE OF

RESPONSIBILITY OF PEOPLE ● WE WILL NOT GET ANYWHERE IF THIS CRUSADE CAPTURES ONLY THE HEARTS OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ● LIKE THE CHALLENGE OF MODERNIZATION ITSELF, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY HAPPEN IF WE BRING THE MESSAGE DOWN TO THE LEVEL OF EVERY CITIZEN ● WE MUST EDUCATE AND TRAIN PEOPLE FOR THIS WORK ● WE MUST ROUSE THE ACTIVISM OF WOMEN, THE YOUTH, LOCAL COMMUNITIES, FARMERS, TRADE UNIONS AND BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY IN THIS EFFORT ●

IN SUM, WE MUST CARRY THIS CAMPAIGN TO THE HOMES OF EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD LIVING IN THIS COUNTRY ● AS I HAVE SAID OF THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY, SO IN THIS ONE WE MUST WAGE THE MORAL EQUIVALENT OF WAR ●

PHILIPPINE COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

TO ENSURE THAT THE COMMITMENTS MADE AT RIO DE JANEIRO, AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE EARTH SUMMIT TO THE PHILIPPINES ARE IMPLEMENTED, PERIODICALLY MONITORED AND COORDINATED AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL, I HAVE SIGNED AN EXECUTIVE ORDER CREATING A PHILIPPINE COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ●

THIS WILL BE A MULTI-SECTORAL BODY, TO BE CHAIRED BY NEDA, WITH THE DENR AS THE VICE-CHAIRMAN, AND WILL BE COMPOSED OF OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE NGO COMMUNITY ●

I AM ALSO DIRECTING NEDA TO INTEGRATE THIS "PHILIPPINE AGENDA 21" IN THE UPDATED PHILIPPINE MEDIUM-TERM DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1993 TO 1998 ●

WITH THE EXISTING DEVOLUTION OF POWERS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS BY VIRTUE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE, I FURTHER DIRECT THE INTEGRATION OF "PHILIPPINE AGENDA 21" INTO

THE PLANS AND PROGRAMS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS AT ALL LEVELS ●

I URGE THE TRANSLATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES NOT ONLY WITHIN THE DENR BUT ALSO IN ALL GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE INSTRUMENTALITIES, INTO SPECIFIC INSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS AND BUDGET PLANS, PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS ● WHILE OUR PREVIOUS EFFORTS HAD BEEN LARGELY CHARACTERIZED BY ADVOCACY, PUTTING ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE POLICIES INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF NATIONAL AFFAIRS, THIS YEAR, 1992, UP TO THE START OF THE 21ST CENTURY SHOULD WITNESS OUR DETERMINED COLLECTIVE DRIVE TO TRANSLATE SUCH ADVOCACY TO MORE PRACTICAL AND TANGIBLE ACTIONS ●

TO OUR LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL DONORS, LET ME EMPHASIZE THAT YOUR FINANCING SUPPORT WILL GO A LONG, LONG WAY ● FOR HEAVILY INDEBTED AS WE ARE, WE MUST INVEST IN THE

PROGRAMS NEEDED TO RATIONALIZE OUR ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT DILEMMA -- THAT IS, TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY AND ATTAIN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WHILE FULLY SAFEGUARDING THE ECOLOGICAL BALANCE ●

I HEREBY APPEAL TO THE SENATE FOR ITS READY SUPPORT IN THE RATIFICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS TO WHICH THE PHILIPPINES IS A SIGNATORY, SUCH AS THE BASE CONVENTIONS ON THE CONTROL OF TRANSBOUNDARY MOVEMENTS OF HAZARDOUS WASTES AND THEIR DISPOSAL, AND THE LONDON AMENDMENTS TO THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL FOR SUBSTANCES THAT DEplete THE OZONE LAYER ●

AT RIO, THE PHILIPPINES WAS A SIGNATORY TO THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE CONVENTION OF BIO-DIVERSITY ● THESE WILL ALSO REQUIRE RATIFICATION FROM THE SENATE ● WE WILL CONTINUE TO RECOGNIZE AND HARNESS TO THE

FULLEST THE CAPABILITIES INHERENT IN MAJOR GROUPS LIKE OUR WOMEN, CHILDREN AND YOUTH, OUR INDIGENOUS BROTHERS AND SISTERS, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, LOCAL AUTHORITIES, LABOR, BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY, FARMERS AND FISHERMEN IN THE COMPLICATED AND DIFFICULT STRUGGLE TO ADDRESS THE FORCES THAT IMPEDE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PHILIPPINES ●

CONCLUSION

THE TASK OF SAVING THE EARTH FROM FURTHER PLUNDER AND DESTRUCTION IS DIFFICULT -- BUT IT NEED NOT BE INSURMOUNTABLE ●

AND WHILE THE CHALLENGES THAT WE FACE ARE MAINLY NOT OF OUR CHOICE, NO NATION HAS EVER BEEN SO READY TO SEIZE THE BURDEN OF PROTECTING AND PRESERVING THE EARTH AS THE PHILIPPINES IS ● WE HAVE SHOWN THIS DURING THE RECENT EARTH SUMMIT AT RIO DE JANEIRO WHEN THE EARTH SAVERS MOVEMENT OF

FR. JAMES REUTER MADE SUCH AN IMPACT ON THE CONVENTION ●

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE ACTIONS THAT WE SHOULD TAKE AND
KEEP PURSUING SHOULD BE NO LESS THAN THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEMS
THAT FACE US, WHETHER AMONG FILIPINOS OR AMONG NATIONS,
BECAUSE IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS OUR MOST BASIC LINK IS THAT WE
ALL INHABIT THIS EARTH ● WE BREATHE THE SAME AIR ● WE ALL
CHERISH OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE ● AND WE ARE ALL MORTALS ●

HERE IN THIS COUNTRY, I BELIEVE WE CAN BUILD A PROSPEROUS
AND DYNAMIC SOCIETY ● I BELIEVE IT IS WITHIN OUR CAPACITY TO
RAISE OUR ECONOMY UPWARD INTO THE HEIGHTS, WHILE YET
ALLOWING FOR THE AMENITIES OF LIFE WITH WHICH HUMAN BEINGS
WERE MEANT TO LIVE -- CLEAN AIR, BLUE SEAS, CLEAR STREAMS,
TEEMING FORESTS, AND ISLANDS BOTH BEAUTIFUL AND BOUNTIFUL ●

THIS IS YOUR DREAM AND MINE ● BY ALL MEANS, LET US MAKE
IT HAPPEN ●

MARAMING SALAMAT PO SA INYONG LAHAT ●

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