

**Speech of H.E. President Fidel V. Ramos  
Second National Symposium on the  
Local Government Code  
September 14, 1992**

**INTRODUCTION**

SECRETARY RAFAEL ALUNAN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SECRETARY EDELMIRO AMANTE, GOVERNOR PAGDANGANAN OF THE LEAGUE OF GOVERNORS, MAYOR OSMEÑA OF THE LEAGUE OF CITY MAYORS, MAYOR REYES OF THE LEAGUE OF MUNICIPAL MAYORS, ALEX DAVID, FORMER NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF OUR ORGANIZATION OF BARANGAY CHAIRMEN AND CAPTAINS, THE PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT ON POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND UNDERSECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, VIC SUMULONG; OUR DISTINGUISHED SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN WHO ARE HERE, OUR CO-WORKERS IN THE CABINET, THE HONORABLE PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS, THE MUNICIPAL MAYORS, THE OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, FELLOW WORKERS IN GOVERNMENT, MGA MINAMAHAL NA KABABAYAN, MAGANDANG HAPON PO SA INYONG LAHAT.

THIS IS A HISTORICAL OCCASION AND I AM DELIGHTED BY THE OVERWHELMING STANCE GIVEN IN THIS SYMPOSIUM AS WELL AS THE LOUD APPLAUSE THAT YOU HAVE GIVEN YOUR PRESIDENT.

I HAVE NOTED THAT SINCE THE PROCLAMATION OF THE PRESIDENT ON THE 22ND OF JUNE 1992 EVERYONE NOW TELLS ME THAT THEY VOTED FOR FIDEL V. RAMOS. AND THIS IS HOW IT SHOULD BE. LET US LEAVE BEHIND OUR POLITICAL DIFFERENCES FOR DEMOCRACY. THERE MUST BE COMPETITIONS, THERE MUST BE A FREE CONTEST. BUT IN OUR CASE, IN THE FUTURE AND IN THIS ENDEAVOR TO MOVE OUR COUNTRY FORWARD AND LIFT OUR PROMISED LAND WHICH ALL FILIPINOS WOULD WANT TO HAPPEN, WE SHOULD BE TOGETHER.

IN A LANDMARK DECISION, FOR WHICH IT WILL LONG BE REMEMBERED IN HISTORY, THE EIGHTH CONGRESS OF OUR REPUBLIC APPROVED ON JULY 21, 1991 REPUBLIC ACT 7160, PROVIDING FOR A LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE IN THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE OF OUR COUNTRY.

AT THE TIME OF ITS PROMULGATION AND ON MANY OCCASIONS SINCE, MANY HAVE PRAISED THE LAW AS A BREAKTHROUGH IN GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION IN OUR COUNTRY.

YET WE WOULD NOT BE TELLING THE WHOLE TRUTH, IF WE DO NOT ALSO SAY THAT THE CODE HAS FILLED MANY WITH FEAR AND FOREBODING; NOT THE LEAST OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, ON WHOSE HANDS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF REALIZING ITS LETTER AND SPIRIT HAS NOW FALLEN.

LOOKING AT THE MIXTURE OF JUBILATION AND FEAR THAT HAS ARISEN WITH THE PASSAGE OF THE LAW, I AM REMINDED OF THE ANCIENT SAYING THAT "WHEN THE GODS WANT TO PUNISH US, THEY ANSWER OUR PRAYERS . "

FROM AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER SINCE I BECAME A NATIONAL OFFICIAL, THERE WAS NEVER A DAY WHEN I DID NOT HEAR MANY A LEADER ORATE ABOUT THE NEED TO DECENTRALIZE GOVERNMENT IN OUR COUNTRY.

NOW THAT PRAYER HAS AT LAST BEEN ANSWERED, THERE IS NOW NEVER A DAY WHEN I DO NOT HEAR FROM SOME OFFICIALS ABOUT THEIR FEAR AND TREMBLING OVER THE LAW.

BUT I AM HAPPY TO HEAR FROM OUR OWN VERY SECRETARY RAFAEL ALUNAN THAT ALL THE APPREHENSIONS HAVE BEEN OVERTURNED AND THE MANY BIG QUESTIONS OF POLICY HAVE BEEN ANSWERED.

I SEE THIS NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM AS A CRITICAL INSTRUMENT FOR EXERCISING THESE FEARS AROUND US. IT IS CRUCIAL TO THE DEVOLUTION PROCESS, SO THAT WE DO NOT WIND UP CURSING THE PASSAGE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE, INSTEAD OF WELCOMING AS IT NECESSARY FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE ENERGIES OF OUR PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE NATION.

THIS IS THE SECOND TIME THIS YEAR THAT WE HOLD A SYMPOSIUM ON THIS CODE. THE FIRST TIME WAS LAST FEBRUARY UNDER THE ADMINISTRATION OF FORMER PRESIDENT CORAZON AQUINO, WHEN THE DEVOLUTION PROCESS WAS JUST BEGINNING. TODAY, WE HOLD THIS SYMPOSIUM WITH MY ADMINISTRATION IN PLACE. TODAY THE PROCESS MUST NOW MOVE WITH DIRECTION AND DISPATCH.

I WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT AT THIS TIME MANY OF THE INITIAL FEARS HAVE AT LEAST BEEN DISPELLED, AND THAT OUR COLLECTIVE ATTENTION CAN NOW BE FOCUSED ON HOW WE CAN FULLY IMPLEMENT THE CODE, WITH THE MINIMUM OF DISLOCATION AND DISRUPTION.

LET US UNDERSTAND FIRST THE CONTEXT WHEREIN THE CODE MUST DO ITS WORK. THERE IS A HISTORICAL EXPLANATION WHY THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION WAS CENTRALIZED AT THE START, JUST AS THERE IS NOW A COMPELLING NEED TO DECENTRALIZE IT.

OUR COUNTRY IS AN ARCHIPELAGO OF OVER 7, 000 ISLANDS, SO THAT IT IS BY ITSELF ALREADY REMARKABLE THAT THROUGH THE CENTURIES THAT OUR ISLANDS HAVE REMAINED TOGETHER TO FORM THE TERRITORY OF THE NATION TODAY WE HAVE STUCK TOGETHER.

TO HOLD THEM TOGETHER, IT WAS NOT ENOUGH THAT WE COHERED ON THE MAP AS A NATURAL UNITY OF ISLANDS AND SEAS. IT REQUIRED SEVERAL WARS TO KEEP THE INTEGRITY OF OUR ARCHIPELAGO INTACT. AND OUR COLONIZERS --SPAIN AND THEN AMERICA -- SAW AS FUNDAMENTAL THE COHESIVENESS AND A CENTRALIZED SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE FOR OUR COUNTRY, WITH MANILA AS THE CENTER OF ADMINISTRATION.

WHEN SELF-GOVERNMENT PASSED INTO OUR HANDS, OUR PAST LEADERS RECOGNIZED AS WELL THE INDISPENSABLE NEED TO KEEP THAT SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION INTACT, KNOWING THAT A NEW, ARCHIPELAGIC NATION COULD FALL PREY TO THE DRUMS OF SEPARATISM AND REGIONAL AMBITIONS.

TO THE CENTRALIZED SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION THEREFORE, IT IS CORRECT TO PAY TRIBUTE FOR OUR COHERENCE AS A NATION.

BUT IT IS ALSO MANIFESTLY TRUE THAT THIS CENTRALIZED SYSTEM HAS EXACTED A HEAVY PRICE FROM OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES, PARTICULARLY THOSE FAR REMOVED FROM OUR NATIONAL CAPITAL. WE ARE A NATION TODAY OF MANY COMMUNITIES AT VARYING STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT. AND WE ARE NOW A NATION OF 62 MILLION PEOPLE DIVIDED INTO RICH AND POOR, RURAL AND URBAN, EDUCATED AND NOT SO WELL EDUCATED.

WHILE SOME HAVE GONE FAR IN ENTERING THE MODERN WORLD, OTHERS HAVE REMAINED

IMPRISONED IN THE PAST.

WHILE SOME AMONG OUR COUNTRYMEN HAVE KNOWN THE GOOD LIFE, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF OTHERS HAVE CONTINUED TO TOIL AND LIVE IN POVERTY.

THE ISSUE OF FAIRNESS THUS KNOCKS AT THE VERY HEART OF THIS UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT OF OUR BELOVED PHILIPPINES.

BUT MORE THAN FAIRNESS, IT ALSO UNDERLINES THE CRUX OF OUR NATIONAL DECLINE AND FAILURE. WE HAVE NOT DEVELOPED AS FAST AS WAS PROPHESED EARLY AFTER WORLD WAR II, BECAUSE WE HAVE NEGLECTED TO RELEASE THE TALENTS AND ENERGIES OF ALL THE COMMUNITIES THAT CONSTITUTE THE NATION.

TO THIS PROBLEM OF DECLINE AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT, DECENTRALIZATION IS PART OF THE ANSWER. BUT IT IS BY NO MEANS THE WHOLE ANSWER. HOWEVER, IT IS CERTAINLY AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION THAT WE SEEK.

### **IMPLEMENTING THE CODE**

WHILE MANY OF YOU IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS IN OTHER SECTORS OF OUR SOCIETY HAVE FEARS AND RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE, I SUBMIT THAT THESE FEARS ARE MORE IMAGINED THAN REAL. THEY ARISE MORE FROM THE FEAR OF HAVING TO DO SOMETHING IN A NEW UNTESTED WAY, RATHER THAN IN THE OLD FAMILIAR THE TRADITIONAL WAY.

AS WITH ALL JOURNEYS THAT WE UNDERTAKE, MOST ARE NATURALLY DISPOSED TO TAKE THE OLD, BEATEN PATH, NO MATTER IF WE TAKES LONGER OR FOREVER TO REACH OUR DESTINATION. ALONG THAT ROUTE, WE ALREADY KNOW THE DANGERS AND PITFALLS, AND WE IMAGINE WE KNOW HOW TO COPE WITH THEM.

BUT STRIKING OUT ON A NEW PATH IS SOMETHING ELSE. ALONG THIS ROUTE ARE MANY UNKNOWN DANGERS, AND WE CANNOT REALLY KNOW HOW TO COPE WITH THEM UNTIL WE FACE THEM.

THERE IS MUCH TO BE SAID ABOUT TRADITION, BUT ONLY IF IT WORKS. IN CONTRAST, THERE IS EVERYTHING TO BE SAID ABOUT INNOVATION AND CHANGE, BECAUSE NEARLY ALL OF THE ADVANCES MADE IN HUMAN HISTORY HAVE BEEN PRECISELY THE RESULT OF FOLLOWING NEW ROUTES AND ADOPTING NEW TECHNIQUES.

THINK FOR A MOMENT ABOUT THIS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. WHERE WOULD THE WORLD BE HAD EXPLORERS LIKE FERDINAND MAGELLAN NOT TAKEN A DIFFERENT ROUTE TO THE EAST AND NOT CIRCUMNAVIGATED THE WORLD ?

WHERE WOULD HUMANITY BE HAD SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY NOT OPENED OUR MINDS TO THE NEW POSSIBILITIES OF DOING THINGS?

IT IS MUCH THE WAY WITH THE SCIENCE AND ART OF GOVERNMENT. SOCIETIES CANNOT PROGRESS UNLESS GOVERNMENTS CEASELESSLY EVOLVE AND INNOVATE ON THEIR SYSTEMS OF ADMINISTRATION. THE OLD WAYS MUST GIVE WAY TO THE NEW.

THIS, I SAY , IS WHAT DECENTRALIZATION AND DEVOLUTION MEAN FOR GOVERNMENT HERE IN OUR COUNTRY.

TO BE SURE, I DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE ENORMOUS PROBLEMS AND LABORS INVOLVED IN DECENTRALIZING GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND IN DEVOLVING RESPONSIBILITIES FROM NATIONAL TO LOCAL LEVEL. THE PROBLEMS ARE FINANCIAL, TECHNICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND BEHAVIORAL IN NATURE. BESIDES RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS, THERE ARE ALSO PROBLEMS OF SKILLS.

AND YOU ASK: HOW READY ARE OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR SO COLOSSAL A CHANGE IN THE SETUP?

I WILL ANSWER: WE WILL NEVER BE READY UNLESS WE TRY. AND WE WILL NEVER REAP THE FRUITS OF LOCAL AUTONOMY UNLESS WE APPLY OURSELVES TO THE CHALLENGE.

IN SAYING THIS, I DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE BY ANY MEANS THE FINANCIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL CONSTRAINTS FACED BY YOU WHO MAN THE RAMPARTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN OUR COUNTRY. THE NATIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE IS FULLY AWARE OF ALL OF THESE.

WHAT I MEAN TO EMPHASIZE IS THAT THE PROCESS OF CHANGE CAN BE HURDLED SUCCESSFULLY AND WITH MINIMUM LOSS OF TIME, AS LONG AS WE DO NOT DELUDE OURSELVES THAT THE CHANGES WILL COME IN AN INSTANT, LET ALONE PAINLESSLY. CAREFUL ADJUSTMENTS MUST BE MADE. CHANGES MUST BE CAREFULLY NURTURED, NOT FORCED DOWN THE THROAT THE WAY DICTATORIAL PROGRAMS ARE USUALLY APPLIED.

IN SHORT, WE MUST CAREFULLY PROGRAM THE WHOLE PROCESS. WE SHOULD BREAK IT DOWN INTO STAGES AND MEASURABLE TARGETS. THIS MUST BE DONE BOTH AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS. AND WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE IN DIFFERENT STAGES OF READINESS FOR THIS REFORM PROGRAM. SOME ARE READY, OTHERS NEED MORE TIME. OTHERS WERE READY BEFORE THE LAST ELECTIONS.

THESE ARE THE CONCERNS THAT THIS ASSEMBLY MUST CONTINUALLY ADDRESS. THESE ARE THE AREAS WHERE MY PRESIDENCY, THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AS WELL AS THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY WHO IS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE WILL FOCUS THE GREATEST ATTENTION.

#### **A PRAGMATIC AND OPPORTUNISTIC APPROACH**

IN THIS PROCESS OF ADJUSTMENT AND CHANGE, I WOULD EMPHASIZE TWO KEY POINTS TO GUIDE US.

ONE IS THAT OUR APPROACH TO THIS PROCESS MUST BE PRAGMATIC. WE MUST MOVE BEYOND THE RHETORIC TO THE PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF DEVOLUTION. PRECISELY BECAUSE THIS MAJOR REFORM CANNOT BE IMPLEMENTED OVERNIGHT, OUR ACTIVITIES AND INSTRUMENTS MUST BE ALWAYS GUIDED BY WHAT IS WORKABLE AND FEASIBLE.

TO CITE ONE AREA OF ATTENTION, LET US NOT IMAGINE THAT BECAUSE A PART OF THE TAXING POWER WILL NOW DEVOLVE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, THAT THEY CAN THEREBY BECOME SELF-RELIANT COMMUNITIES OVERNIGHT. THIS IS NOT SO. WE HAVE TO MEASURE OUR PROGRESS EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

I ASSURE YOU THAT MY GOVERNMENT WILL NOT LEAVE OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OUT ON A LIMB ON THIS MATTER OF FINANCES NEITHER OF THE CONGRESS. AND SO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND CONGRESS WILL SPEARHEAD THE CHANGE PROCESS IN A MANNER THAT WE RELAY THEIR VIEW IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO

COPE WITH THE CHALLENGE EFFECTIVELY.

ANOTHER MATTER FOR PRIORITY ATTENTION IS THE NEED FOR INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING IN THE DEVOLUTION PROCESS. THIS SYMPOSIUM TODAY IS PART OF THAT LEARNING PROCESS. THIS CANNOT JUST BE A CASE OF CONGRESS DECREETING THE CHANGE, AND OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ACCEPTING THE RESPONSIBILITY. INDEED, THE CODE STRESSES THE NEED FOR MOTIVATION AND EDUCATION. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE TO BE HELPED IN LEARNING THE TOOLS FOR HANDLING THEIR LARGER RESPONSIBILITIES.

AND I ASSURE YOU THAT WE IN THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT WILL STAND WITH YOU DEPARTMENT BY DEPARTMENT. ACTIVITY BY ACTIVITY, IN IMPLEMENTING THIS REFORM PROGRAM. DO NOT FEAR THAT WHEN YOU WAKE UP TOMORROW, YOU ARE FACED WITH THE CHALLENGE OF PROVIDING BASIC SERVICES WHILE WE IN THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT WASH OUR HANDS OF THEM, MAYBE NOT TOMORROW, BUT MAYBE SOON AFTER THAT.

EQUALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO STRESS THE NEED FOR OUR APPROACH TO BE OPPORTUNISTIC. THE WORD HAS AN UNPLEASANT CONNOTATION FOR MOST OF US. BUT IT HAS ALSO A PROGRESSIVE MEANING, AND THAT IS THE IDEA OF TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE WITH GOOD GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC WELFARE WHEN THAT OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF. ADVANCES MADE BY MEN AND INSTITUTIONS ARISE PRECISELY IN THIS WAY.

I BELIEVE THAT AS OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS START TO LOOK AT THEIR JURISDICTIONS FROM THIS NEW FRAMEWORK OF INCREASED POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, YOU WILL ALL BEGIN TO SEE ENORMOUS OPPORTUNITIES AND POSSIBILITIES. YOU WILL BEGIN TO SEE YOUR RESOURCES -- NATURAL AND HUMAN -- IN A WAY THAT YOU PROBABLY NEVER DID BEFORE. YOU WILL BEGIN TO REALIZE WHAT YOU CAN DO IN ORDER TO TRANSFORM YOUR COMMUNITIES UNDER YOUR LEADERSHIP INTO MORE ATTRACTIVE HAVENS FOR INVESTMENT LIVELIHOOD AND OTHER ECONOMIC EFFORT. BUT YOU MUST START WITH YOUR GARBAGE, THE CLEANLINESS OF YOUR STREETS AND THE GREENING OF YOUR ENVIRONMENT. START WITH YOUR PEACE AND ORDER CONDITION START WITH A CLEAR PROGRAM OF YOUR LOCAL ADMINISTRATION.

IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, THE STRUGGLE FOR DEVELOPMENT IS REALLY A COMPETITIVE PROCESS. THOSE UNWILLING TO COMPETE TO ACHIEVE EFFICIENCY AND CREDIBILITY INEVITABLY ARE LEFT BEHIND. AS THE GOOD BOOK SAYS, "GOD HELP THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES," AND WHO AM I TO VIOLATE THE SAYING IN THE GOOD BOOK.

BY THIS, I DO NOT SUGGEST THAT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT WILL JUST THROW YOU ALL INTO THE MARKET TO FEND FOR YOURSELVES. OR THAT WE WILL CONVERT OUR ECONOMY INTO A DOG-EAT-DOG AFFAIR. NO, IT WILL NOT BE LIKE THAT.

RATHER, THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE ENVISIONS A REGIME IN WHICH OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES WILL INCREASINGLY BECOME MORE AUTONOMOUS AND SELF-RELIANT, WHILE THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT GUIDES THE ENTIRE PROCESS OF NATIONAL MODERNIZATION AND MAKES IT MORE EQUITABLE. WHERE COMMUNITIES NEED ASSISTANCE, WE MUST AND WILL ASSIST. WHERE COMMUNITIES REQUIRE HELP TO MAXIMIZE AVAILMENT OF THEIR OPPORTUNITIES, WE MUST AND WILL PROVIDE ASSISTANCE. WHERE WE MUST BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT, WE WILL BUILD THEM.

BUT AT BOTTOMLINE, YOU MUST ALL FACE THE FACT THAT YOUR COMMUNITIES WILL PROGRESS ONLY

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INTENSITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR OWN LABORS AND ACHIEVEMENTS. YOU MUST PULL YOURSELVES UP BY YOUR OWN TALENTS AND EXERTIONS.

IT IS IN THIS LIGHT THAT LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT BECOME SO IMPORTANT IN REALIZING THE NOBLE OBJECTIVES OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE. WITHOUT STRONG POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, THE HIGH GOALS WILL ONLY WITHER IN THE VINE. WITHOUT STRONG COMMUNITY SUPPORT -- FROM THE NGOS, FROM PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATIONS, FROM BUSINESS, FROM EVERY OTHER SECTOR -- NO LOCAL COMMUNITY CAN HOPE TO THRIVE AND FLOURISH.

### **THE NEED FOR JOINT ACTION**

OUR NATIONAL DELIVERANCE WILL COME FROM THE SUM OF WHAT WE DO SEPARATELY AND TOGETHER IN OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES. WITH EMPOWERMENT OF OUR PEOPLE AND OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, EACH CAN CONTRIBUTE MORE TO NATIONAL LIFE. WITH GREATER COORDINATION OF ALL THESE ACTIVITIES HAPPENING IN OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES, THE WHOLE COUNTRY CAN THEN RISE AS ONE.

THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF MY VISION AND MY PROGRAM FOR OUR COUNTRY. THAT IN EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES, AND IN ABANDONING THE TRICKLE-DOWN AND CENTRALIZED POLICIES OF THE PAST, WE CAN DO MUCH MORE FOR OUR COUNTRY AND FOR EACH OTHER.

THE OVERRIDING PRINCIPLE IS THAT ONLY BY JOINT, INTEGRATED ACTION -- AT NATIONAL, LOCAL AND PEOPLE'S LEVELS -- CAN WE EVER HOPE TO ACHIEVE OUR NATIONAL GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS.

THE SUCCESS OF NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION RESTS ON DYNAMIC INTERACTION WITH LOCAL LEADERS AND THE PEOPLE THROUGH UNITY, SOLIDARITY AND TEAMWORK .

WHILE MANY OF OUR PROBLEMS ARE NATIONAL IN SCOPE, THEY EXIST IN NEIGHBORHOODS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES. HENCE, THE SOLUTIONS MUST ALSO BE TAILORED TO LOCAL NEEDS.

WHILE OUR PROBLEMS REQUIRE A BROAD NATIONAL STRATEGY AND THE POLITICAL WILL TO ATTACK THEM, OUR RESPONSE MUST BE INFUSED BY LOCAL PERSPECTIVE AND EXPERTISE.

NO PROGRAM, NO MATTER HOW ADEQUATELY FUNDED, CAN HOPE TO UPROOT PROBLEMS IF IT IS ANCHORED SOLELY IN MANILA. IT MUST FIND FOR ITS PILLARS THE LIFE AND EXPERIENCE OF OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES WHICH YOU, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN REPRESENT.

OUR TASK THEN AS LEADERS AND CITIZENS ALIKE IS TO CONSTRUCT AND REINFORCE THE SYMBIOTIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, BETWEEN THE METROPOLITAN CAPITAL AND THE COUNTRYSIDE, BETWEEN THE PRESIDENCY AND THE PEOPLE.

TO WIN THE FUTURE FOR OUR COUNTRY, WE MUST WIN IT FIRST IN EVERY COMMUNITY, EVERY PROVINCE AND EVERY ISLAND IN OUR VAST ARCHIPELAGO .

THIS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IS THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF PROGRESS. WE ARE ALL THE BUILDING BLOCKS, AND HEAVEN HELP THIS NATION IF WE DO NOT MEASURE UP TO THE CHALLENGE AND THE OPPORTUNITY BEFORE US. THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE TO DO. THIS IS THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US.

MY BEST WISHES TO ALL OF YOU FOR A FRUITFUL AND SUCCESSFUL ADMINISTRATION .

MARAMING SALAMAT PO AT MABUHAY KAYONG LAHAT.

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