

**Joint Statement of President Fidel V. Ramos,
President-Elect Joseph Estrada and House Speaker Jose de Venecia
BRP Ang Pangulo, Port Area, Manila, 26 May 1998**

President Fidel V. Ramos, President-elect Joseph Estrada and Speaker of the House Jose de Venecia today forged an agreement in principle to form a government of national unity to enable the country to move forward confidently and perform successfully in the arena of international competition.

The agreement was reached in a breakfast meeting today among the three leaders at the BRP Ang Pangulo (AT-25).

Pres. Ramos urged the incoming President to use the gains of the country during the last six years to address the present economic and social challenges facing the Filipino people. "Each succeeding government must be able to build and, if possible, improve upon its predecessor for the good of the whole nation," Pres. Ramos said.

Welcoming the support of Pres. Ramos, Vice-Pres. Estrada said, "we need to put the atmosphere of political rivalry behind us now, so that we can maximize the benefits of a working democracy such as what we have in the country today."

The three leaders further stressed that adversaries in the last election must now look upon themselves not as political enemies but as friends and allies working for the common good of the Filipino people. They noted that the Philippines is blessed with a stable, democratic system of political governance that gives the country a competitive edge within the entire Asia-Pacific region. Complemented by the unity and cooperation among its leaders, there is no reason why the Philippines cannot cope effectively with economic and political difficulties of the region, Ramos and Estrada said.

One of the immediate areas of cooperation being studied is the forging of a working coalition in Congress between the ruling Lakas-NUCD-UMDP-KAMPI and Vice Estrada's LAMMP. Such a coalition in both the House and the Senate is contemplated to spur and facilitate the enactment of laws that will respond aggressively to the needs of economic recovery and development and social equity.

Ramos, Estrada and de Venecia expressed optimism that the President-elect will be proclaimed in time for the country's Centennial celebration on June 12, 1998.

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