

**Speech of President Joseph E. Estrada**  
Silliman University Convocation  
Luce Auditorium, 10:00 a.m., September 25, 2008

*ISANG MAGANDANG UMAGA AT MABUHAY SA MGA OPISYAL, MGA GURO, MGA KAWANI, MGA MAG-AARAL, MGA KABABAYAN, MGA OPISYAL NG LUNGSOD NG DUMAGUETE SA PANGUNGUNA NI **MAYOR PERDICES**, MGA OPISYAL NG LALAWIGAN NG NEGROS ORIENTAL SA PAMUMUNO NI GOVERNOR MACIAS, AT MGA PILING PANAUHIN NG SILLIMAN UNIVERSITY.*

*MAAYONG BUNTAG KANINYONG TANAN!*

IT IS A SIGNAL HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE FOR ME TO SPEAK BEFORE THE OFFICIALS, THE FACULTY AND STAFF, AND THE STUDENT BODY OF THIS PREMIER UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH, THE SILLIMAN UNIVERSITY.

I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND MY BELATED CONGRATULATIONS TO SILLIMAN UNIVERSITY ON THE OCCASION OF ITS CELEBRATIONS OF ITS 107<sup>th</sup> FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY LAST MONTH.

I AM INFORMED THAT SILLIMAN UNIVERSITY HAS CONSISTENTLY RANKED HIGH NEXT ONLY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES IN THE PERFORMANCE OF ITS GRADUATES IN LICENSURE OR BOARD EXAMINATIONS IN THE DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS. MAYBE ATENEO CAN LEARN SOMETHING FROM YOU.

IF I AM NOT MISTAKEN, THE LAST TIME I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK IN SILLIMAN WAS ABOUT TWENTY YEARS AGO. IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, I WAS NOT ABLE TO SPEAK BEFORE THE SILLIMAN COMMUNITY WHEN I WAS VICE-PRESIDENT OR EVEN AS PRESIDENT.

THAT IS WHY I HAVE ALWAYS LOOKED FORWARD FOR AN INVITATION FROM YOU, AND WHEN I GOT IT, I ACCEPTED IT AT ONCE BEFORE YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR MIND. AFTER ALL, IT IS NOT OFTEN THAT AN EX-CONVICT IS INVITED TO BE THE GUEST SPEAKER IN A DISTINGUISHED INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING SUCH AS YOURS.

I WISH TO EXPRESS MY SINCERE APPRECIATION FOR THE KIND INVITATION YOU HAVE EXTENDED TO ME AS CONVEYED BY ONE OF MY FAVORITE PROFESSORS, **PROF. LEONOR MAGTOLIS BRIONES**.

WITH **PROF. BRIONES** SERVING AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF SILLIMAN UNIVERSITY, THIS UNIVERSITY IS IN VERY SAFE HANDS. WHEN I BECAME PRESIDENT, I APPOINTED HER AS THE NATIONAL

TREASURER WITHOUT RESERVATIONS BECAUSE I WAS CERTAIN THE TREASURY WOULD BE IN GOOD HANDS.

THAT IS WHY, WHEN I WAS FORCIBLY AND UNCONSTITUTIONALLY REMOVED AS PRESIDENT, MY ADMINISTRATION LEFT BEHIND SAVINGS OF ABOUT 75 BILLION PESOS IN CASH DEPOSITS AND 50 BILLION IN RESTRICTED DEPOSITS AT THE BANKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS. THIS IS IN MARKED CONTRAST TO MY PREDECESSOR WHO LEFT ME A PRACTICALLY BANKCRUPT TREASURY.

PROF. BRIONES ATTESTED TO THIS, AND FOR BEING HONEST AND TRUTHFUL, SHE IMMEDIATELY LOST HER JOB AS NATIONAL TREASURER IN THE ARROYO GOVERNMENT.

I THANK YOU FOR THE WARM RECEPTION YOU HAVE EXTENDED TO ME TODAY. I ALSO EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION FOR THE WARM WELCOME EXTENDED TO ME BY OUR COUNTRYMEN HERE IN NEGROS ORIENTAL AND IN DUMAGUETE CITY.

I AM INFORMED THAT NEGROS ORIENTAL HAS BEEN THE RECIPIENT OF SEVERAL AWARDS, INCLUDING A CITATION FOR LOCAL CAPACITY IN PURSUING THE UNITED NATIONS MILLIENEUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS, AND A SPECIAL AWARD FROM THE GALING POOK FOUNDATION. I AM SURE THIS PROVINCE IN DUE TIME WILL BE AMONG THE MORE DEVELOPED AREAS OF OUR COUNTRY.

I AM EXCEPTIONALLY PLEASED TO SPEAK BEFORE THE STUDENT BODY IN SILLIMAN BECAUSE I AM AWARE OF THE CALIBER AND HIGH STANDARDS OF THIS UNIVERSITY. I AM CONVINCED THAT TODAY, I AM SPEAKING TO THE COMING GENERATIONS OF LEADERS OF THE COUNTRY.

IT IS NOT REMOTE THAT THE FUTURE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES MAY BE AMONG THOSE LISTENING TO ME NOW. I HAVE A SOUND AND SENSIBLE ADVICE TO YOU IF YOU BECOME PRESIDENT: DO NOT GET YOURSELF IMPEACHED!

MY SECOND ADVICE IS, DO NOT LIE AND STEAL BECAUSE IF YOU DO SO, LIKE THE PRESENT TENANT OF MALACANANG, YOU WILL HAVE TO BARRICADE YOURSELF IN MALACANANG WITH ELECTRIC FENCES AND CONTAINERIZED VANS, AFRAID TO FACE YOUR OWN PEOPLE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IT IS BOTH SAD AND UNFORTUNATE THAT AS WE MEET TODAY, THE ILLS OF BOTH POVERTY AND CORRUPTION ARE ERODING THE MORAL FIBER AND SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF OUR SOCIETY. MANY OF OUR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN TAINTED AND

DIMINISHED, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, WITH THE STAIN OF CORRUPTION OR SCANDAL.

WE VIEW TODAY WITH MUCH DISTRESS THE ANOMALIES PLAGUING OUR INSTITUTIONS, FROM THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS; FROM THE EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT AND THE BIUREAUCRACY TO CONGRESS; FROM THE JUDICIARY TO THE ELECTORAL INSTITUTION; AND FROM THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT TO POLICE AND LAW-ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.

EVEN THE CHURCH AND ITS BISHOPS, AS WELL AS THE MEDIA AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAVE NOT BEEN SPARED FROM SCANDALS.

FROM WHERE I STAND, ONLY THE ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS TODAY, THE UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR STUDENT BODIES REMAIN TO BE UNTAINTED, AS THEY CONTINUE TO BE THE VANGUARDS AND DEFENDERS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE, OF HONESTY AND INTEGRITY IN GOVERNMENT, AND IN THE CONDUCT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

RIZAL'S FIRM CONVICTION THAT THE YOUTH IS THE HOPE OF THE MOTHERLAND REMAINS TRUE TODAY, AND WE MUST BELIEVE IN IT. FOR IF WE DO NOT, THERE IS NOTHING ELSE FOR US TO BELIEVE IN. THE IDEALISM OF THE YOUTH CAN RECTIFY THE EXCESSES AND PERVERSITIES OF THIS AND PAST GENERATIONS. THEY CAN REDEEM THIS NATION AND RESTORE IT TO ITS ONCE PRE-EMINENT AND RESPECTED POSITION IN THE COMMUNITY OF NATIONS.

AND FOR THEM TO DO THIS, THEY MUST BE PREPARED TODAY TO ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY THAT THEY WILL BE CHARGED TO FULFILL.

I HAVE THIS BELIEF THAT EDUCATION IS THE BEST PREPARATION FOR THEM, WHICH IS WHY, IN ALL THE YEARS I HAVE BEEN IN PUBLIC SERVICE, I HAVE NOT COLLECTED MY SALARIES, AND HAD DONATED THEM INSTEAD TO SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS.

WHEN I BECAME MAYOR, ONE OF MY EARLIEST PROJECTS WAS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE VERY FIRST HIGH SCHOOL IN OUR MUNICIPALITY OF SAN JUAN, THE SAN JUAN MUNICIPAL HIGH SCHOOL, WHICH HAS NOW BECOME THE SAN JUAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL.

THIS SCHOOL HAS RECENTLY CELEBRATED ITS 38<sup>th</sup> YEAR AND HAS NOW OVER 20,000 GRADUATES. THESE GRADUATES HAVE BECOME SUCCESSFUL PROFESSIONALS, AS DOCTORS, LAWYERS, ENGINEERS, NURSES OR BUSINESSMEN. WHILE SOME MAY HAVE GONE ABROAD, MANY HAVE STAYED AND ARE NOW THE CIVIC AND BUSINESS LEADERS AND PROFESSIONALS IN SAN JUAN AND IN METRO MANILA.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS SCHOOL IS ONE OF THE EARLY PROJECTS THAT I AM MOST PROUD OF BECAUSE IT HAS RESPONDED TO THE NEED FOR A PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL IN OUR COMMUNITY WHERE THE CHILDREEN OF POOR FAMILIES CAN ENROL AT NO COST.

WHEN I BECAME SENATOR, WE ALSO ESTABLISHED THE ERAP PARA SA MAHIRAP FOUNDATION TO PROVIDE COLLEGIATE SCHOLARSHIP TO POOR BUT DESERVING STUDENTS. THIS PROGRAM CONTINUES TODAY AND HAS NOW GRADUATED OVER 12,000 SCHOLARS WHO ARE NOW GAINFULLY EMPLOYED AND HAVE BECOME PROFESSIONALS AND PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS.

AS PRESIDENT, I GAVE MY SUPPORT TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ERAP MUSLIM YOUTH FOUNDATION WHICH THEY ACCUSED AS A MONEY-LAUNDERING ORGANIZATION DURING THE IMPEACHMENT TRIAL AGAINST ME. TODAY, THIS FOUNDATION CONTINUES TO PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS TO OUR POOR BUT DESERVING MUSLIM BROTHERS, NOT ONLY AT THE COLLEGIATE LEVEL, BUT EVEN IN THE MASTERAL OR POST-GRADUATE PROGRAM.

SO YOU CAN SEE THAT FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO POST-GRADUATE EDUCATION, I HAVE EXTENDED MY CONTINUING SUPPORT EVEN WHEN I WAS IN DETENTION, TO EXPRESS MY FIRM AND UNWAVERING BELIEF IN THE VALUE OF EDUCATION.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE EDUCATION SECTOR IS NOW THREATENED BY CONTINUING DECLINE IN GOVERNMENT SPENDING. AS A RESULT, THE POOR BUT DESERVING STUDENTS ARE NOT BEING GIVEN THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF SUPPORT IN PURSUING AND COMPLETING THEIR EDUCATION, AND FOUNDATION BASED SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS CAN ONLY DO SO MUCH.

THE APPROPRIATIONS FOR VITAL SECTORS SUCH AS EDUCATION, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND AGRICULTURE HAVE BEEN DECLINING CONSIDERABLY IN THIS REGIME. THE AMOUNT APPROPRIATED IN OUR BUDGET FOR BASIC EDUCATION ALONE IS NOT SUFFICIENT. IN THE 2007 BUDGET FOR EXAMPLE, ABOUT 134 BILLION PESOS WAS ALLOCATED FOR BASIC EDUCATION WHICH IS LESS THAN HALF OF THAT ALLOCATED FOR DEBT SERVICE.

POVERTY INCIDENCE, ON THE OTHER HAND, PARTICULARLY IN THE RURAL AREAS, HAS BEEN RISING. MEANWHILE, OUR POPULATION CONTINUES TO GROW IN THE FACE OF HIGH INFLATION, JOBLESSNESS AND LOSS OF OPPORTUNITIES.

IN SPITE OF WHAT THIS GOVERNMENT PROCLAIMS AS ITS POLICY OF GIVING BAND-AID SUBSISTENCE DOLE-OUTS TO POOR FAMILIES IN METRO MANILA, GOVERNMENT SPENDING FOR SOCIAL SERVICES OR ITS SHARE AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE BUDGET HAS BEEN STEADILY DECLINING. SOCIAL

SERVICES REPRESENT EXPENDITURES FOR EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND SOCIAL WELFARE, AMONG OTHERS.

FROM AROUND 33.81 PERCENTAGE SHARE OF THE BUDGET IN 1999, DURING MY PRESIDENCY, THE SHARE OF SOCIAL SERVICES SPENDING HAS GONE DOWN TO ABOUT 27.9 PERCENT IN 2006. I AM PROUD TO CLAIM THAT THE SHARE OF SOCIAL SERVICES DURING MY ADMINISTRATION HAD BEEN AT ITS HIGHEST, AS COMPARED TO OTHER PRESIDENTS, FROM PRESIDENT MARCOS, PRESIDENT AQUINO, PRESIDENT RAMOS AND TO THE PRESENT TENANT OF MALACANANG.

THE STUDENTS HERE TODAY ARE LUCKY BECAUSE NOT ONLY ARE YOU PURSUING A COLLEGE DEGREE, BUT YOU ARE ALSO ENROLLED IN ONE OF THE BEST UNIVERSITIES IN THE COUNTRY. BUT MANY ARE NOT GIVEN THIS CHANCE BECAUSE OF EXTREME POVERTY. MANY ARE DENIED THE OPPORTUNITY FROM THE TIME THEY REACH SCHOOL AGE.

THE FIGURES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL COORDINATION BOARD REVEALS THAT ONE FOR EVERY SIX FILIPINO CHILDREN OF SCHOOL AGE IS NOT ENROLLED. THE PARTICIPATION RATE AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2006-2007 WAS DOWN TO 83 PERCENT, AS COMPARED TO THAT OF 1999 TO 2000 WHEN THE PARTICIPATION RATE WAS ALMOST 97 PERCENT.

IN HIGH SCHOOL, THE FIGURES ARE EVEN MORE DEPRESSING. ALMOST HALF OF FILIPINO CHILDREN AGED 12 TO 15 YEARS OR ABOUT 44 PERCENT HAVE FAILED TO ENROLL. THE NUMBER OF THOSE WHO FAIL TO ENROLL IS INCREASING WITH EACH PASSING YEAR.

IF THEY CANNOT EVEN ENROLL IN HIGH SCHOOL, HOW MUCH MORE IN COLLEGE? OUR YOUTH, ESPECIALLY THE CHILDREN OF POOR FAMILIES, ARE NOT BEING GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY RIGHT FROM THE VERY START IN BASIC EDUCATION.

AND POVERTY, CORRUPTION AND MISPLACED PRIORITIES ARE THE CULPRITS. THESE CHILDREN WHO SHOULD BE IN SCHOOL ARE ROBBED OF THEIR CHILDHOOD AND OF THEIR OPPORTUNITIES. THEY INSTEAD HAVE TO WORK, FIND WORK OR ROAM THE STREETS SEEKING THEIR NEXT MEAL, AND EVENTUALLY, GET INVOLVED IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES.

JUST RECENTLY, THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL AND COORDINATION BOARD OR THE NSCB, A GOVERNMENT AGENCY ATTACHED ADMINISTRATIVELY TO THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, REPORTED THAT POVERTY INCIDENCE IN THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN INCREASING FROM 24.4 PERCENT IN 2003 TO 26.9 PERCENT IN 2006.

IT IS ALSO ESTIMATED THAT FOR EVERY 100 FILIPINOS, 33 WERE POORER IN 2006 COMPARED TO 30 IN 2003. THIS IS AN OFFICIAL REPORT FROM A GOVERNMENT AGENCY, WHERE THERE MAY EVEN BE SOME UNDER-REPORTING.

THE SECOND QUARTER SURVEY OF THE SOCIAL WEATHER STATIONS SUGGEST THAT 16.3 PER CENT OR SOME 3 MILLION FILIPINO FAMILIES HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCING INVOLUNTARY HUNGER, WHILE ABOUT 760,000 FAMILIES SUFFERED FROM SEVERE HUNGER. THIS IS HIGHER THAN WHAT WAS RECORDED LAST YEAR DURING THE SAME PERIOD.

THE PULSE ASIA SURVEY CONDUCTED FROM FEBRUARY TO MARCH OF THIS YEAR ALSO SHOWED THAT SEVEN OUT OF TEN FILIPINOS CONSIDER THEMSELVES POOR. THIS IS HIGHER THAN THE OCTOBER, 2007 SURVEY. IN THIS SAME SURVEY, 2 OUT OF 3 OF EVERY FILIPINOS BELIEVE THAT THE ECONOMY HAS DETERIORATED DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS.

ALSO JUST RECENTLY, THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD BANK, MR. **JAMES WOLFENSOHN**, WHO I AM TOLD IS A RESPECTED FIGURE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GLOBAL POVERTY, CONFIRMED THE RISING POVERTY IN THE PHILIPPINES. HE EXPRESSED DISMAY THAT THE POVERTY INCIDENCE IN THE COUNTRY HAD WORSENERD DESPITE REPORTED ECONOMIC GROWTH.

BUT IF POVERTY IS WORSENERD, SO IS CORRUPTION. THIS IS A CLAIM THAT DOES NOT COME FROM ME OR THE OPPOSITION ALONE, BUT FROM INDEPENDENT AND IMPARTIAL OBSERVERS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK IN ITS RECENT COUNTRY REPORT ON THE PHILIPPINES ALSO CONFIRMED WORSENERD CORRUPTION IN THE COUNTRY. THE 2008 GLOBAL CORRUPTION REPORT OF TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL NOW SHOWS THAT THE PHILIPPINES HAS DROPPED TEN PLACES MORE FROM 131ST TO 141ST OUT OF 180 COUNTRIES IN CORRUPTION.

THE SCOURGE OF CORRUPTION CONTINUES TODAY WITHOUT LET-UP. WE DISCOVER AND PILE UP ANOMALY AFTER ANOMALY, SCANDAL AFTER SCANDAL, AND EXPOSE AFTER EXPOSE. THIS COUNTRY HAS BEEN DECLARED AS AMONG THE MOST CORRUPT NATION IN THE WORLD, AND THE LATEST SURVEY OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RISK CONSULTANCY HAS AGAIN IDENTIFIED THE PHILIPPINES AS THE MOST CORRUPT IN ASIA.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WORSENERD POVERTY AND WORSENERD CORRUPTION IS NOT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND. POVERTY IS WIDESPREAD BECAUSE FUNDS TO FIGHT POVERTY ESPECIALLY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE HAVE EITHER BEEN STOLEN OR DIVERTED, AS IN THE CASE OF THE FERTILIZER SCAM. AND NOW, WE ALSO DISCOVER OTHER SCAMS, THE SWINE SCAM, THE RICE SCAM, AND THE VEGETABLE SCAMS. THESE SCANDALS RUN

UP, NOT JUST TO MILLIONS OF PESOS, BUT TO BILLIONS WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN USED TO FINANCE SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES.

AND TO ADD TO OUR MISERIES, WE CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE SHORTAGES – SHORTAGES IN RICE, BASIC COMMODITIES, CLASSROOMS, TEACHERS, JOBS, OPPORTUNITIES, CAPITAL. YOU NAME IT. BUT THE MOST DISTURBING SHORTAGE IS THE SHORTAGE OF TRUTH AND HONESTY IN GOVERNMENT. IN OTHER WORDS, THIS NATION HAS BEEN SYSTEMATICALLY SHORT-CHANGED.

THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH MISPLACED PRIORITIES. THIS GOVERNMENT HAS EMBARKED ON HIGH SOUNDING AND SUPER EXPENSIVE PROJECTS SUCH AS CYBER CORRIDORS, CYBER-EDUCATION, SUPER-REGIONS AND THE INFAMOUS ZTE NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK. THE TRADEMARK OF THIS ADMINISTRATION NOW IS THAT EXCESSIVELY OVERPRICED 329 MILLION U.S. DOLLAR NATIONAL BROADBAND PROJECT WHICH WAS BLOATED BY 200 MILLION US DOLLAR IN COMMISSION OR TONGPATS. THE BROADBAND, ASIDE FROM HELLO GARCI, IS NOW THE ACCEPTED TRADEMARK OF THIS ADMINISTRATION.

*SAMANTALANG AKO WRISTBAND LANG AND TRADEMARK KO.*

HOW CAN WE, IN ALL HONESTY, EMBARK ON AN EXPENSIVE CYBER-EDUCATION PROJECT FOR OUR SCHOOLS WHEN WE ARE SHORT ON CLASSROOMS, ON TEACHERS, ON TEXTBOOKS, ON SCHOOL DESKS AND ON SCHOOLBUILDINGS, AMONG OTHERS. AND IF WE HAVE SCHOOLBUILDINGS AND CLASSROOMS, THEY ARE EITHER FLOODED OR ARE LEAKING.

MEANWHILE, IN THE SOUTH, ARMED CONFLICT AGAIN CONTINUES. THE PEACE AND ORDER SITUATION CONTINUES TO BE DISTURBED NOT JUST BY FIGHTING BETWEEN GOVERNMENT FORCES AND SECESSIONIST GROUPS, BUT BY CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES PERPETRATED BY BANDITS AND RENEGADE SPLINTER GROUPS OF THE SEPARATIST ARMY.

I AM SURE YOU WILL AGREE WITH ME THAT NOT EVEN THE BEST ECONOMISTS IN THIS UNIVERSITY, OR IN ANY UNIVERSITY, OR EVEN IN THE WORLD, CAN BRING DEVELOPMENT TO MINDANAO IF THE PEACE AND ORDER SITUATION REMAIN UNSTABLE.

AS PRESIDENT, I WANTED TO RESTORE THE SOVEREIGNTY AND CONTROL OF THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT OVER THE TERRITORIES AND CAMPS THAT HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED BY REBEL GROUPS. IN THESE TERRITORIES, THEY HAVE SET UP THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT, THEIR OWN LAWS, THEIR OWN POLICIES AND HAVE PRACTICALLY PROCLAIMED INDEPENDENCE FROM OUR COUNTRY.

THAT IS WHY I DECLARED AN ALL OUT WAR. BECAUSE SOMETIMES MEN NEED TO WAGE WAR IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE PEACE.

I BELIEVED THEN AND NOW THAT IT IS THE DUTY OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES AS COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES TO DEFEND AND PRESERVE THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THIS NATION. THE PRESIDENT MUST NOT PRESIDE OVER THE DISMEMBERMENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND MUST DEFEND OUR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AT ALL COST.

THAT IS WHY I VEHEMENTLY OPPOSED THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BANGSAMORO JURIDICAL ENTITY IN THE CANCELLED MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT FOR ANCESTRAL DOMAIN.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE 46 CAMPS WHICH WE RECOVERED WHEN I WAS PRESIDENT WERE RETURNED AND NOW WE HAVE RETURNED TO THAT VICIOUS CYCLE OF PEACE TALKS AND COMPROMISES, NEGOTIATIONS AND AGREEMENTS. ONLY TO LAPSE INTO ARMED CONFLICT THAT CONTINUE TO CLAIM SO MANY LIVES, SOLDIERS, REBELS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, INNOCENT CIVILIANS. MANY COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN DISPLACED AND DISLOCATED. WE MUST END THIS CONFLICT OR WE WILL END THIS REPUBLIC.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THERE ARE MORE ISSUES TO ADDRESS AND I REGRET THERE IS NOT MUCH TIME IN THIS FORUM TO CONSIDER THE MANY PROBLEMS CONFRONTING PHILIPPINE SOCIETY TODAY. WE HAVE BEFORE US A STAGGERING AGENDA OF REFORM AND RECONSTRUCTION, OF RENEWAL AND REHABILITATION, OF REDEMPTION OF A SOCIETY AND A NATION THAT HAVE BEEN LANGUISHING IN A DARK ERA WHICH I WILL CALL THE FILIPINO NATION'S LOST DECADE.

THERE IS MUCH FOR US TO DO, AND WE HAVE TO DO IT OURSELVES. WE MUST BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THIS DESTINY OF RECOVERING THE INTEGRITY OF OUR NATIONHOOD. AND WE MUST RELY ON THE YOUTH TO BE THE LEADERS OF THIS REFORM MOVEMENT.

I AM REMINDED OF WHAT FORMER **PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN**, A FELLOW ACTOR AND ONE OF MY IDOLS, WHO SAID IN HIS FIRST INAUGURAL SPEECH AS PRESIDENT, AND I QUOTE, "IN THIS PRESENT CRISIS, GOVERNMENT IS NOT THE SOLUTION TO OUR PROBLEM; GOVERNMENT IS THE PROBLEM." END OF QUOTE.

IT IS ALSO RELEVANT HERE TO QUOTE ANOTHER AMERICAN PRESIDENT, **JOHN F. KENNEDY**, WHO SAID, AND I QUOTE: "THOSE WHO MAKE A PEACEFUL REVOLUTION IMPOSSIBLE WILL MAKE A VIOLENT REVOLUTION INEVITABLE." END OF QUOTE.

IN OUR TENDER YEARS, WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT THREE IMPORTANT VALUES: THE LOVE OF GOD, THE LOVE OF COUNTRY AND THE LOVE OF FAMILIES. IN THE PROCESS OF SERVING THESE VALUES HOWEVER, WE NEGLECT THE MIDDLE ONE – THE LOVE OF COUNTRY. THIS IS THE TIME TO REDISCOVER THAT IMPORTANT VALUE THAT WE HAVE ALL THESE YEARS TAKEN FOR GRANTED.

IN CLOSING, PLEASE ALLOW ME TO CITE THE MOTTO OF SILLIMAN UNIVERSITY, **VIA, VERITAS, VITA**, - I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE. THIS I BELIEVE MUST SERVE AS THE GUIDING SPIRIT OF OUR MOVEMENT FOR REFORM AND RENEWAL.

TOGETHER, WE MUST FIND THE WAY AND BE GUIDED BY THE TRUTH SO THAT WE WILL ACHIEVE THE LIFE THAT OUR PEOPLE, OUR YOUTH, OUR COUNTRY AND THE COMING GENERATIONS OF FILIPINOS --- CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS, LUMADS, VISAYANS, ILOCANOS OR TAGALOGS --- SO RICHLY DESERVE. WE MUST REMAIN AS ONE NATION OF FILIPINOS UNDER THE ALMIGHTY GOD AND HIS GRACE.

THANK YOU AND GOOD DAY.

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