

Inaugural Speech of President Benigno S. Aquino III 15th President of the Republic of the Philippines¹

His Excellency Jose Ramos Horta, Former President Fidel V. Ramos, Former President Joseph Estrada, Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile and members of the Senate, House Speaker Prospero Nograles and members of the House, justices of the Supreme Court, members of the foreign delegations, Your Excellencies of the diplomatic corps, fellow colleagues in government, aking mga kababayan.

My presence here today is proof that you are my true strength. I never expected that I will be here taking my oath of office before you, as your president. I never imagined that I would be tasked with continuing the mission of my parents. I never entertained the ambition to be the symbol of hope, and to inherit the problems of our nation.

I had a simple goal in life: to be true to my parents and our country as an honorable son, a caring brother, and a good citizen.

My father offered his life so our democracy could live. My mother devoted her life to nurturing that democracy. I will dedicate my life to making our democracy reach its fullest potential: that of ensuring equality for all. My family has sacrificed much and I am willing to do this again if necessary.

Although I was born to famous parents, I know and feel the problems of ordinary citizens. We all know what it is like to have a government that plays deaf and dumb. We know what it is like to be denied justice, to be ignored by those in whom we placed our trust and tasked to become our advocates.

Have you ever been ignored by the very government you helped put in power? I have. Have you had to endure being rudely shoved aside by the siren-blaring escorts of those who love to display their position and power over you? I have, too. Have you experienced exasperation and anger at a government that instead of serving you, needs to be endured by you? So have I.

I am like you. Many of our countrymen have already voted with their feet - migrating to other countries in search of change or tranquility. They have endured hardship, risked their lives because they believe that compared to their current state here, there is more hope for them in another country, no matter how bleak it may be. In moments when I thought of only my own welfare, I also wondered - is it possible that I can find the peace and quiet that I crave in another country? Is our government beyond redemption? Has it been written that the Filipino's lot is merely to suffer?

Today marks the end of a regime indifferent to the appeals of the people. It is not Noynoy who found a way. You are the reason why the silent suffering of the nation is about to end. This is the beginning of my burden, but if many of us will bear the cross we will lift it, no matter how heavy it is.

Through good governance in the coming years, we will lessen our problems. The destiny of the Filipino will return to its rightful place, and as each year passes, the Filipino's problems will continue to lessen with the assurance of progress in their lives.

We are here to serve and not to lord over you. The mandate given to me was one of change. I accept your marching orders to transform our government from one that is self-serving to one that works for the welfare of the nation.

This mandate is the social contract that we agreed upon. It is the promise I made during the campaign, which you accepted on election day.

During the campaign we said, "If no one is corrupt, no one will be poor." That is no mere slogan for posters -- it is the defining principle that will serve as the foundation of our administration.

¹ Philstar, June 30, 2010

Our foremost duty is to lift the nation from poverty through honest and effective governance.

The first step is to have leaders who are ethical, honest, and true public servants. I will set the example. I will strive to be a good model. I will not break the trust you have placed in me. I will ensure that this, too, will be the advocacy of my Cabinet and those who will join our government.

I do not believe that all of those who serve in our government are corrupt. In truth, the majority of them are honest. They joined government to serve and do good. Starting today, they will have the opportunity to show that they have what it takes. I am counting on them to help fight corruption within the bureaucracy.

To those who have been put in positions by unlawful means, this is my warning: we will begin earning back the trust of our people by reviewing midnight appointments. Let this serve as a warning to those who intend to continue the crooked ways that have become the norm for too long.

To our impoverished countrymen, starting today, your government will be your champion.

We will not disregard the needs of our students. We will begin by addressing the glaring shortage in classrooms and educational facilities.

Gradually, we will lessen the lack of infrastructures for transportation, tourism and trade. From now on, mediocre work will not be good enough when it comes to roads, bridges, and buildings because we will hold contractors responsible for maintaining their projects in good condition.

We will revive the emergency employment program established by former President Corazon Aquino. This will provide jobs for local communities and will help in the development of their and our economy.

We will not be the cause of your suffering or hardship. We will strengthen collections by the Bureau of Internal Revenue and we will fight corruption in the Bureau of Customs in order to fund our objectives for the public welfare, such as:

- Quality education, including vocational education, so that those who choose not to attend college or those who cannot afford it can find dignified livelihood;
- Improved public health services such as PhilHealth for all within three years;
- A home for every family, within safe communities.

We will strengthen the armed forces and the police, not to serve the interests of those who want to wield power with impunity, but to give added protection for ordinary folk. The armed forces and the police risk their lives daily so that the nation can live in peace and security. The population has doubled and yet their numbers remain unchanged. It is not right that those who make sacrifices are treated pitifully.

If there was a fertilizer scam in the past, today there will be security for farmers. We will help them with irrigation, extension services, and marketing their products at the best possible prices.

We are directing Secretary Alcala to set up trading centers that will directly link farmers and consumers thereby eliminating middlemen and opportunities for corruption. In this way, funds can be shared by farmers and consumers. We will make our country attractive to investors. We will cut red tape dramatically and implement stable economic policies. We will level the playing field for investors and make government an enabler, not a hindrance to business. This is the only means by which we can provide jobs for our people.

Our goal is to create jobs at home so that there will be no need to look for employment abroad. However, as we work towards that end, I am ordering the DFA, POEA, OWWA, and other relevant agencies to be even more responsive to the needs and welfare of our overseas Filipino workers.

We will strengthen the process of consultation and feedback. We will strive to uphold the constitutional right of citizens to information on matters of public concern.

We relived the spirit of people power during the campaign. Let it take us to good and effective governance. Those who believe in people power put the welfare of others before their own.

I can forgive those who did me wrong but I have no right to forgive those who abused our people.

To those who talk about reconciliation, if they mean that they would like us to simply forget about the wrongs that they have committed in the past, we have this to say: there can be no reconciliation without justice. When we allow crimes to go unpunished, we give consent to their occurring over and over again. Secretary de Lima, you have your marching orders. Begin the process of providing true and complete justice for all.

We are also happy to inform you the acceptance of Chief Justice Hilario Davide of the challenge of strengthening and heading a Truth Commission that will shed light on many unanswered issues that continue to haunt our country.

My government will be sincere in dealing with all the peoples of Mindanao. We are committed to a peaceful and just settlement of conflict, inclusive of the interests of all -- may they be Lumads, Bangsamoro or Christian.

We shall defeat the enemy by wielding the tools of justice, social reform, and equitable governance leading to a better life. With proper governance life will improve for all. When we are all living well, who will want to go back to living under oppression?

If I have all of you by my side, we will be able to build a nation in which there will be equality of opportunity, because each of us fulfilled our duties and responsibilities equally.

After the elections, you proved that it is the people who wield power in this country.

This is what democracy means. It is the foundation of our unity. We campaigned for change. Because of this, the Filipino stands tall once more. We are all part of a nation that can begin to dream again.

To our friends and neighbors around the world, we are ready to take our place as a reliable member of the community of nations, a nation serious about its commitments and which harmonizes its national interests with its international responsibilities.

We will be a predictable and consistent place for investment, a nation where everyone will say, "it all works."

Today, I am inviting you to pledge to yourselves and to our people. No one shall be left behind.

No more junkets, no more senseless spending. No more turning back on pledges made during the campaign, whether today or in the coming challenges that will confront us over the next six years. No more influence-peddling, no more patronage politics, no more stealing. No more sirens, no more short cuts, no more bribes. It is time for us to work together once more.

We are here today because we stood together and believed in hope. We had no resources to campaign other than our common faith in the inherent goodness of the Filipino.

The people who are behind us dared to dream. Today, the dream starts to become a reality. To those among you who are still undecided about sharing the common burden I have only one question: Are you going to quit now that we have won?

You are the boss so I cannot ignore your orders. We will design and implement an interaction and feedback mechanism that can effectively respond to your needs and aspirations.

You are the ones who brought me here - our volunteers - old, young, celebrity, ordinary folks who went around the country to campaign for change; my household help who provided for all my personal needs; my family, friends, colleagues at work, who shared, cared, and gave their support; my lawyers who stayed all hours to guard my votes and make sure they were counted; and the millions of Filipinos who prevailed, kept faith, and never lost hope - I offer my heartfelt gratitude.

I will not be able to face my parents and you who have brought me here if do not fulfill the promises I made.

My parents sought nothing less, died for nothing less, than democracy and peace. I am blessed by this legacy. I shall carry the torch forward.

My hope is that when I leave office, everyone can say that we have traveled far on the right path, and that we are able to bequeath a better future to the next generation. Join me in continuing this fight for change.

Thank you and long live the Filipino people! End.....