



ARANGKADA PHILIPPINES FORUM

Realize the Potential! | February 26, 2013 at the Makati Shangri-la

**Transcribed Acceptance Speech of
Former President Fidel V. Ramos
Recipient of the first
*Arangkada Lifetime Achievement Award***

Thank you very much, dear *Arangkadas*, who are the leaders of the Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce in the Philippines. You know, Foreign Chambers are more fun in the Philippines. Got it? Let me also address our special guest of honor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Speaker Sonny Belmonte who is an old buddy, and his Deputy Speaker Congressman Erin Tanada. And if the Senate President is here, let me greet Manong Johnny or his representative. Or maybe they are out busy campaigning because of the very strong opposition, against each other. Where... husband-wife, brother-sister, father-sons are probably involved. That's all you'll hear from me about politics.

But today dear friends, allow me to express my—at ease guys, at ease—to the leaders of the Joint Chambers, who are our dear friends in the Philippines, for this honor you have bestowed on me. I feel like being present at my own necrological service. Having listened to Shameem, who has been here as long as I have. *Magaling ito*. He had a business in Cotabato which conked out during my time, correct? And so are the others. But I really was greatly surprised by being called up to the stage. But being an old soldier, and aside from that, being a Chief Intelligence Officer, I must confess to you that I did not come unprepared. *Sandali*

The Arangkada Philippines Project (TAPP)

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lang ah.... There are no pockets in our national dress, you know. Maybe this needs some “*Arangkada*-processing”.

But dear friends, let me just raise two points in connection with *Arangkada*’s grand initiative for getting the Philippines to be more competitive, not only in our region of Asia and the Pacific, but also globally.

Historically, and this is the first issue on my part. Filipinos have opposed constitutional change, yet we know that there is no social contract except for the Ten Commandments that is ever written on stone. Eventually, fellow Filipinos, we must amend the 1987 Charter. For instance, the definitions for the prohibition and the penalties for both dynasticism and turncoatism must now be implanted in the language of the Constitution itself instead for waiting for an enabling act to make these two obstacles—I call them—punishable. For instance, in the ’87 Constitution, there is a very strong, and I would say reasonable, prohibition on the part of the President as Chief Executive from appointing relatives to the fourth degree of consanguinity and affinity into any executive office. So why not just write that in the constitution, so that it is there? Now with regard to turncoatism, this is the offspring of dynasticism, because one will naturally want to stay in office, in power, in positions of influence for as long as the law allows it.

In Thailand, they adopted a recent amendment to their Constitution. I think it must be the 17th looking at the post-World War II period. And they merely say there, very simply, “Hey, you want to change your political party? Go ahead, but you will be disqualified from running for political office for the next three years, or if there is an



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election going on, you're disqualified. But go ahead and transfer, go to another political party." Very simple.

{Digression}

In the internet, because I assume all you guys are computer-savvy right? Marubeni? Okay, okay. And so, to go onto constitutional reform, let me quote one of Speaker Sonny Belmonte's good friend. I am talking about Representative Edcel Lagman who just championed the passage of the unpopular but now very popular RH bill in regard to population management for the future, not only as a means to reduce poverty, but really, in the long run, to produce a quality Filipino. There will be no more beggars in the street. Edcel suggests that the President and the Vice President must be elected together. Block voting it's called, as the US practices, so that the number one and number two in the country will always be working as a team. I think this is what they call synergy, or the new arithmetic and in the 21st century. One plus one is equals to three or five. It could be ten. But really its eleven. Because that is digital, according to the Indians.

{Digression}

Also, on the part of economist Bernie Villegas talking about constitutional reform also says, "the protectionist provisions hampering the inflow of foreign capital and technology maybe refined without amending the 1987 Charter, but simply by innovative legislation," and I agree. There is so much of this speech prepared by John Forbes, who is my dear friend, that... *ang haba*. But let me continue his main thing about protectionism. Until now, protectionism is a cultural defect engrained



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by our colonial experience in the Philippines and therefore we must make our economy more attractive to foreign investment because the capital generated from such inflows whether foreign, domestic, or a combination of both will generate jobs that will be quality jobs and not livelihood derived from mom-and-pop operations there at the *sari-sari* store. No, we want quality in the Philippines.

Lastly, let me commend *Arangkada* and the two houses of Congress for gaining many things during the last year compared to last year, and it's all here in this piece of propaganda written by John Forbes. Have you read *BusinessWorld* today? It says, you were able to achieve so many percent in passing this and that and also finishing projects. But you know, to me, this is fine, but it's really just all numerical and statistical. So we need to really agree—and the leaders of Congress are here, and some members of the Cabinet are here also, and some ex-people like Bobby de Ocampo.

{Digression}

What I would like to propose, and these are just unsolicited advice from an old fogey, is that we must have a more active and productive network with the executive and with the legislature. In the old days—and I hate to be talking so much about my time because that was so long ago, with our kinds of system that were operational at least for 33 weeks every year for as long as Congress was in session—this was based on consultation and consensus. As we say in Asian, *mushawra mufakat*. Anybody from Indonesia here? Malaysia? That's Malay. Consultation and consensus. And the main body for this to take place was a mechanism called LEDAC, Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council



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[bill], the very first law that I signed into law in December 1992 after my distinguished predecessor President Cory Aquino had vetoed the same bill. I don't know for what reasons, but in my case, being a neophyte politician suddenly thrust into the position of being the headman there in Malacañang, I thought we needed to consult not only the leaders, but also the people and also the foreign community, as well as just walk-ins that wanted a piece of the Philippine action. And so [with] the LEDAC, I pushed and pushed so that it was enacted in December 1992 four months after I took over. And it has proven to be a great mechanism, because, there, the private sector is well represented—maybe five members of the Cabinet during one session, but the sectoral representative from academe, from the youth, from the women, from the workers but special sector, the overseas workers, the farmers, the fisherfolk, the women, the veterans, the elderly, and the handicapped. And we had a prepared agenda every Wednesday morning. We met at seven o'clock. And all you got at breakfast was not this fancy stuff that we have today at lunch. I did not finish 50% of that nice meal. All you got there in Malacañang was coffee and one pandesal, because it was the agenda that was the main part of the menu. And, well, depending on the issue, we invited certain members of the Cabinet, including some members of the National Security Council, and we had good interaction with among, maybe, 45 people. It may not solve the problem, but we had consensus in regard to the next step, or the next direction, or the right direction. And we did not adjourn until we had agreed on the next Wednesday's agenda, and that is where we went on and on, year by year, for 33 Wednesdays a year. And it worked. With the help of guys like Congressman Sonny Belmonte at that time and Senator Roberto Tañada—Bobby in the opposition—, we were able to pass 229 structural and reform laws in the space of six years. That's



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roughly nine new laws—not of local application but of national application—one new law of this kind every nine days. That's really *arangkada* I tell you.

Now having said all of that, let me tell you that it's not John Forbes who is responsible for what I am telling you. I am the culprit. But what I am telling you I said in writing two years ago in this piece of work in the *Philippine Business Review*. So what I told you is nothing new, got it? So we are more than two years delayed, but I am optimistic that with the *daang tama* of President Benigno S. Aquino III, but which I hope will not just [be] *daang tama per se*, which is the straight path, because this is also a straight path—zero growth. And let me quote some statistics for that looking at the last five years. According to one of our agricultural experts who used to be in my Cabinet, the agriculture budget has grown from some 16 billion pesos per year five years ago to what it is now to some 70 billion pesos in the budget. But in terms of gross value added (GVA) in the agricultural sector, look at the record. Year 2009, that's not PNoy, that's somebody else. GVA growth was zero percent. Year 2010, okay, *hati-hati*, half and half, GVA growth, zero percent. Ah, 2011, we are seeing some day light—GVA growth, two percent, and last year, GVA growth, 2.7 percent. So we are on the right track, but we may be moving too slowly. So why not, as suggested by this expert, not strategize more intimately on your part with the executive and the legislative, so that you want to happen—looking at *Arangkada* three—will already have happened in the next 12 months in terms of legislation.

Now having said that, let me close, dear friends—before we get arrested for environmental pollution, sergeant, please pick up the pieces of paper. Let me just end by just suggesting three sets of buzzwords for all of us to be guided by.



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First of all, for individuals, *tayo*, we, as junior staff, as small entrepreneurs, as lead winners CEO, we have to be more caring, sharing, and daring for each other and for the Philippines. Caring and sharing are easy enough to do, because, as Filipinos as well as all of you global citizens, are naturally like that. But daring is something else. It means simply to give more than to take. To take concerted action, to make a difference. Also, in terms of global threats, to enhance the environment instead of abusing it.

Now the next set of buzzwords I recommend to you are also simple. It is UST. It's not University of Sto. Tomas. Its Unity, Solidarity, Teamwork. Unity of purpose. *Iisang layunin, iisang hangarin para sa sambayanang Pilipino*. And what is that? A better quality of life. What is that in terms of practical best practices? It means I would like the successors of all of these guys here who are the lead CEOs to succeed better than them. This is what I told my successor when he took over from me on June 30, 1998 at Barasoain Church in Bulacan. I said, "Mr. President, I hope you will succeed better than me, and I will be there to support you." Simple. Because we are always building the nation upward. The trend of nation-building maybe should now be like what is being shown by the Philippine Stock Exchange. On a daily basis, it's going up and down, because there are always problems, questions, external factors, maybe domestic mishaps that are happening, but the direction should be upward and upward, and upward, until we have achieved the better quality of life that we all want. So unity of purpose. Second, S—solidarity in values. Values. Love of God. Love of country. Love of people. Love of the environment. Love of time. Love of work. Love of information. Love of health. Love of reproduction. Love of thy neighbor, ah, but not love of thy neighbor's wife,



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etcetera, etcera. And then T—teamwork in nation-building. This is it. This is nation-building.

Lastly, the third set for the individuals. Perform. Perform. Please perform when you pray and pray when you perform. Very simple. Next, in regard to policy, in regard to framework, in regard to architecture, in regard to structure, perform then reform. Be up-to-date. Be there to supply the needs of the people. You must reform. You cannot be engraved in stone. You have to go with it. And lastly—and this is for the nation; this is for the world community, because we must realize we are only a little planet in the solar system; we are just one of a billion other systems created by the Almighty—perform, reform, transform, so we can continue to be sustainable as human beings that are happy, that are harmonious with each other, and lastly, that are productive in terms of adding to the quality of life. All of that means, *arangkada!*

Kaya ba natin to? Translation—can we do this? Okay, mga Pinoy, kaya ba natin to? Napakahinang sagot ninyo mga Pilipino. Ilakas natin sabay-sabay, yugyugin natin itong lumang Shangri-La hotel na ito. Dahil sa sigaw natin, pababagsakin nating itong bubong na ito. Okay once more. By the way, so you can be heard in Malacañang, in the Senate, in the House, sa kasulok-sulukan ng Pilipinas at ng buong mundo para marinig tayong mga Pinoy. Minsan pa, sabay-sabay. Kaya ba natin ito? Kayang-kaya... nahulog na. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.