

**PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL ARROYO'S SPEECH
DURING THE OPENING PROGRAM OF THE 3rd MINISTERIAL FORUM
OF THE EAST ASIAN SEAS (EAS) CONGRESS 2009
Summit Hall, Philippine International Convention Center (PICC)
Pasay City, MM
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Thank you, Secretary Atienza for your introduction. And thank you for the good work you've done in hosting this conference, forum and congress in behalf of the government of the Philippines.

Mr. Chairman Chua; Miss Badcock; and, of course, my former Cabinet member, PEMSEA Executive Director Lotilla; members of the Diplomatic Corps; ministers; delegates; ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome! The Philippines is honored to host this forum and congress of the Partnerships in Environmental Management of the Seas of East Asia or PEMSEA. Congratulations on your tireless efforts in continuing dialogue and coordinated actions to protect the seas and rebuild coastal communities in this part of the world.

The backdrop to this forum is that with representatives meeting in Denmark to advance cooperation to stop global warming, we here in East Asia are literally treading water from the last blow of typhoons that have increased in ferocity as global warming has increased in scope. Island nations such as the Philippines and many in this room, are particularly vulnerable to rising tides and shifting sands.

And increasingly, our regional natural disasters are being laid at the feet of man-made global warming. If men and women make these problems, then men and women must solve them, too. The path to sustainable global growth is a low-carbon economy, better energy efficiency, cleaner and renewable energy, and good coastal resource management.

That is why our position in the Philippines on climate change is very strong: we are calling for a binding outcome in Copenhagen. We can no longer afford to play the blame game while we are mired in a climate debate. Climate change does not make a distinction between developed and developing economies when it hits. Both have respective roles and responsibilities in addressing this challenge, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities.

It is of primary interest to us that to ensure that any outcome in Copenhagen includes a cohesive and comprehensive financing mechanism to support climate change adaptation, such as disaster control and management, and integrated coastal management.

When we were having an impromptu summit in APEC on climate change, the President of the United States said that even as the developing countries, the G-77 of which the Philippines is a very active member, are demanding binding commitments in carbon reduction from the Annex I countries. The developing countries too should go to Copenhagen with their own commitments so that the financing can be transparent and accountable. And I have said the Philippines is ready to go with its commitments. (applause)

One of the commitments that the Philippines is prepared to comply with is that we must have a certain percentage of our municipal coastal waters in every municipality, 15 percent set aside as a sanctuary. And that is something we can bind because it is accordance with our laws.

As leaders of the world's fastest growing region, we should set the tone for the success of Copenhagen and marshal the resource to secure the survival of countries, cultures, and ecosystems that are threatened by climate change.

At no time has the need for greater cooperation and connectivity been demanded of East Asia than now. We can come together to work hand-in-hand to provide assistance and put in place new measures to combat natural disasters. PEMSEA has a big role to play. And the Philippines is happy to have hosted for the last many years PEMSEA as a regional program funded by the Global Environmental Facility as implemented by the UNDP. But we are very happy that today PEMSEA gets its own legal personality with the Philippines as its headquarters. (applause) Congratulations!

Our country's support for PEMSEA foreshadowed the Philippine position, as mentioned by Popo Lotilla earlier, to place the oceans in the mainstream of climate change discussion, a stand similarly taken by the Manado World Oceans Conference in May this year.

In Manado we also adopted the Coral Triangle Initiative Plans of Action that affirm the valuable role of Integrated Coastal Management in climate change adaptation.

PEMSEA has, indeed, been a major influence in making the peoples of this Region aware that as stakeholders all of us are expected to contribute to efforts to stop the degradation of our marine waters.

In 2006, I issued Executive Order 533 adopting Integrated Coastal Management as a national strategy to ensure the sustainable development of coastal marine environment and resources as a means of achieving food security, sustaining livelihood, as well as reducing poverty.

This Executive Order has been applied in several important coastal and ocean management programs in the Manila Bay, in Batangas, Cavite, Bataan and Guimaras. The Manila Bay area, the bailiwick of Secretary Lito Atienza where we

are now, is part of the urban beltway that generates 52% of our country's GDP. PEMSEA's invaluable assistance, along with the support of scores of national government agencies and local government units, NGOs and financial institutions, resulted in the crafting of the ICM plan for the bay that was later replicated in all coastal provinces comprising the Manila Bay area. And I thank PEMSEA for your central role in doing that masterplan. (applause)

As the tragic aftermath of the recent typhoons have shown, global warming and the impact mankind has made on our global environment is no longer a hypothetical issue. And while global warming is not the root of every change in climate, it is here, the rain is falling, the tide is rising, and we must all stand up and take action.

There are many things each individual nation can and will do. Certainly, in the Philippines, as I have mentioned with some of the examples that I gave earlier, we are forging ahead to invest and plan accordingly. But our individual efforts will not suffice. This is an issue for everyone. We must rise and fall together; we are all interconnected. Your supply of fish may come from the rich fishing grounds in the Philippines; our supply of steel may come from a coastal port in a neighboring nation. Each dependency will be threatened if we do not act together.

Global economic recovery which is the other big challenge we have today does not mean restoring the global economy to what it was before. It also requires a climate change response and a new paradigm for growth. That paradigm means that every country must fundamentally transform the structure of its economy and create growth that is truly 'green.' And for us to create growth that is truly 'green,' we must create seas that are truly 'blue.' (applause)

So to all of you, congratulations on the role of PEMSEA!

Thank you for coming and Mabuhay! (applause)

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