

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH DURING THE 8th ANNUAL
BALIK SCIENTIST PROGRAM (BSP) CONVENTION
Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), Pasay City
October 14, 2022**

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Thank you very much to our Secretary of Science and Technology, Dr. Renato Solidum; our host for today's activities Pasay City Mayor Imelda Calixto-Rubiano; we thank the DOST Undersecretary Sancho Mabborang for his attendance here today; DOST Assistant Secretary Leah Buendia for her briefing on the achievements of the Balik Scientist Program; our renowned Balik Scientists and all the distinguished guests who are here this morning; ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

I congratulate the Department of Science and Technology for being able to hold the 8th Annual Balik Scientist Program Convention. This continuous effort, which began in 1975, in creating opportunities for emerging Filipino scientists anchored in the enhanced use of science, technology and innovation is truly noteworthy.

But I think more than anything else, allow me to extend my heartfelt gratitude and from not only from myself, but from the entire country, to our scientists, for your service to the nation. Your contributions to the development of science and technology in the country have been truly remarkable. It is very heartwarming to see that you have chosen to return to the Philippines to use your expertise to help improve the lives of Filipino people, and I know that this decision in many cases has meant a potential loss of opportunities.

Let the gratitude and support of your government and our people suffice to compensate for your dedication, service, and sacrifice for our motherland.

I welcome this year's convention that highlights our Balik Scientists' activities, accomplishments and research contributions in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, natural resources, health, industry, energy and other emerging technologies.

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As Usec. Buendia was giving her briefing, I turned to Dr. Solidum and I commented that I was impressed by the number of patents that have emerged. This is generally the guide that we use, this is generally the measure that we use when we are talking especially of primary research, that is now a part of the most --- that is the most important part of much of our research that we are doing because of so many new developments, so many new challenges that we are facing, for which we look to science for a solution and for an answer.

As we all know, the world we live in has become more and more dependent on technology. We live more and more of our lives in the digital world. We have been confronted by a pandemic that again look to science for solutions, for vaccines, for protocols, for strategies, for technologies that would help us out of that particular problem.

We now – because of the pandemic – have learned that it is science that will provide for us the answers to the future and the accompanying problem of that is the discernment between what is science and what is rumor. That is a problem that we are all facing ourselves in public lives, you of course in the science community have a great deal to deal with in those terms.

But nonetheless, I think we have come to learn better and better. We have learned the lesson better and better, that we must look to science, we must look to raw data, we must look to actual results, we must look to the scientific method for the answers that we are searching for.

Climate change is now the primordial problem, of not only the Philippines, but of the entire world. And again it has been something that scientists have been warning us about for decades, except we chose not to listen. We are listening now and that's why we look again on this very important aspect because climate change, as you well know affects every single part --- every single part of governance.

In this day and age, everything that we discuss, everything that we plan, we have to take into account climate change. And that is something that I believe is the same situation for everyone else around the world. Of course, there are specific conditions that affect the Philippines but again we look to our scientists, we look to science to provide us the answers for the mitigation and the adaptation that we have to undergo if we are going to flourish and do better in the future.

It is commendable to see that we not only encourage the culture of science and technology research among local academic institutions,

national government agencies and the private sector, but also fostering a culture of collaboration and cooperation among the different sectors of society.

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As we take advantage of the many opportunities available to us under what is becoming the new normal, it is important to highlight the critical role of the DOST --- with the help of the participating Balik Scientists --- to address the perennial issues in the country through research and development initiatives.

You must continue to strengthen the implementation of the Balik Scientist Program and find ways to provide more incentives to encourage more Filipino scientists to come back to the country and share their expertise.

How many times have we gone abroad and have we gone to see a success story in a private sector or in government and when we are being --- when it is being explained and we are being briefed about that success story, how many times have we found that at the core was a group of Filipinos working hard, waiting, hoping that they be given the opportunity to do that work here in the Philippines. That is what we need to provide to them.

We need to provide to them the incentives. Ang Filipino naman gusto niyang umuwi. Ang Filipino hanggat maari --- kung maari ay nais nila na makapag-trabaho dito at makapiling ang kanilang pamilya, ang kanilang pinanggalingan. Ang hinihingi lang naman ng ating mga scientists ay mabigyan sila ng suporta, in terms of equipment, in terms of facilities, in terms of funding. And that is again what the Balik Scientist Program is all about.

It is my hope that you will sustain and augment the short, medium and long-term benefits for our Balik Scientists and their families provided for under the law and beyond. These benefits do include allowances, education assistance for their minor children, participation in grants-in-aid projects, amongst many others. And perhaps we will take even more initiatives because in this technological world, once again, we look to our scientists, we look to science to solve our problems, to show us the way to the future.

I also urge the DOST to develop many more initiatives that will inspire our young people to pursue scientific and technological courses. It is unfortunate that the Philippines, when we are graded amongst other countries, we do not do very well at all, especially when it comes to 'yung STEM courses na tinatawag.

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Let us turn that around. And the Balik Scientist Program will have a very important part to play because we can always present to our young people, our young student, look at this Filipino who has made a name for himself and who has done a lot of good work and his or her good work has helped very, very many people, you can do this too.

Kaya't mag-aral kayo ng science, ng technology, ng engineering, ng mathematics and that will be --- that the role that they will play as a model for our young people is not an unimportant factor. So let us also encourage our young people by showing them what a career in science, research and development, in what the work that is being done by our Balik Scientists and to motivate them and to inspire them and to explain to them, that you can do this too.

I urge you to fully support all the research projects and the inventions that our Balik scientists bring. Let this platform as well as other programs inspire the younger generation of Filipino scientists to dedicate their talent, their knowledge and energy for the nation.

You may always be assured that I and my administration will extend all support in making science and innovation an instrument of progress and prosperity for the Filipino. [applause]

I suppose you will be able to --- [applause] I suppose with the words that I am saying you will be able to detect that I am a frustrated scientist. [laughter] All my scholastic career was spent in science and it was only towards the end that it was explained to me by my father that mahirap 'yung science, hindi ka yayaman diyan. [laughter] Boy, if you were alive now, I would like to introduce him. I would like to introduce him to Elon Musk, I'd like to introduce him to Bezos, I'd like to introduce him to Microsoft, to Apple.

And so that is why I feel very strongly about it and I know the advantages that science can bring and that the training in the technical, the technical training that our students can receive and the advantages they will bring to themselves and also to our transforming economy.

I encourage everyone here present to continue searching for more avenues to work with one another in employing science and innovation for the benefit of our people. We can no longer do what we used to do. The pandemic changed everything and that is why we must innovate. And that again is where science comes in.

I am not talking about just the physical sciences now include --- to include the social sciences which have become part of the changes that we have had to face. After all, even if we belong to different fields, we perform different tasks, we share a unified goal of achieving a brighter and more progressive Philippines for us all.

Maraming, maraming salamat sa inyo at ipagpatuloy po natin ang ating Balik Scientist Program. [applause] Mabuhay po kayong lahat at magandang umaga po. [applause]

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