

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH AT THE PHILIPPINE TOURISM INDUSTRY
CONVERGENCE RECEPTION
SMX Convention Center Mall of Asia Complex in Pasay City
October 17, 2022**

[00:00:08]

Thank you very much for that very rousing introduction from our Secretary, from the Department of Tourism. Please take your seats.

Vice President Sara Duterte; the Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps; of course, our Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco; and I must complete my greetings by also greeting our First Lady, the First Lady Louise Araneta-Marcos; [applause] fellow workers in government; distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, magandang gabi na --- magandang gabi sa inyong lahat.

I was watching the presentations that were made and we really have to give Secretary Christina a round of applause [applause] for all that she has already managed to do in – what is it – a hundred and three days and to show that we have very much to look forward to when it comes in the area of tourism.

Very early on, even before I took office, in consultation with our economic managers with – even private businessmen, it became very clear from the very beginning that as we transform our economy, one of the possible and high potential drivers for the transformation for the economy was tourism. And the reason is I think to us all quite obvious because we in the Philippines have been so fortunate to have been born to this very beautiful country. And even more so, we have been so lucky to be born to such beautiful people.

And that's why immediately I said that this is something that we can show the world and immediately this will come to help. All the preoccupation at the very beginning was we always talk about jobs, we always talk about employment. And I have a bit of an experience in Ilocos Norte when we promoted tourism very quickly and it became very clear to me immediately that the upstream and the downstream employment that tourism brings is significant.

[00:03:04]

And I thought that we should do this back to the Philippines and I felt a great deal of sadness to watch during the pandemic these beautiful places that are slowly going to cede simply because we were not allowed to travel.

So once it was possible, I thought immediately that this is a driver of our economy and we must immediately do all that we can to make sure that this asset that the Philippines has must be used to bring jobs to people, good jobs to people; to bring visitors to our country to once again as we have said during the trips that we have taken these past few weeks, to reintroduce the Philippines to the world.

And that I think is what we will be trying to do. And I think the Secretary has very much taken us in the very good direction to achieve that. And so the strategies that we decided to employ were really rather simple and it is that we will develop our resort areas, we will develop those that are already known, we will also find new ones.

But the government has to play its part. We will do all the publicity and we will welcome all our friends from all over the world. But the government has to do its part and the government's part is that we develop and that we make sure that these beautiful places, number one, have the people to run them, the staff to run them, and that's why the job fair was an immediate priority; that we have people to run these resorts to an international level.

Another thing that we considered immediately necessary was that we must improve the accessibility of all of these places to have direct access to smaller airports not necessarily the big airports of Manila, of Cebu, of CDO, of GenSan but also to the smaller areas. And furthermore, that we must provide the infrastructure to develop that access, the infrastructure to develop the area. And I was just noting when I first arrived I said, well, precisely because the Secretary in all our Cabinet meetings is saying, "But I have to develop the infrastructure. I don't have the budget for it. We don't have enough money that has been given to us."

And so you'll note that the Secretary of Public Works and Highways is in a very important place of honor because I think [chuckles /applause] I think the Secretary has some sinister plans on your budget. [laughter] And of course also the Secretary of Trade and Industry because we have to promote this, we have to put together these operations so that they are efficient. And we will get the testimonials from our visitors and they will say that they will hopefully post, tweet and say that, "I just came from Manila, I just came from a vacation in the Philippines and it was absolutely wonderful. You should all come and try it."

[00:07:08]

That is what we are trying to achieve. And we have achieved it before and I think we can, especially with the very good people that we have asked and who have kindly enough agreed to help us and that is of course our Secretary for the Department of Tourism, Secretary Christina Frasco, our Cabinet members who all immediately understood what it is that we were trying to do. And I really look forward and I have great optimism and I have great hope that this will be successful.

And I believe that it will be because once again like in all our endeavors in this government, we always come back to our greatest asset. And the greatest asset that we have in the Philippines are the 107 million Filipinos who are a young, well-trained workforce, who are as kind a people, as hospitable a people, as gracious a people as you will find anywhere in the world. And that those advantages are what we are going to present and to again, as I said, reintroduce to the rest of the world. This is the Philippines; this is the Filipino.

And again, as I said, I am confident because I have said this many, many times that there is no warmer, more poignant sight than the smile of a Filipino and that is something that we can introduce to the world.

So, I congratulate the Department of Tourism for all they have done. I would like to explain to you that you know when Secretary Christina first took on the Secretary of Department of Tourism, she moved so quickly that I had to talk to the others in the Cabinet and I said, "You know she's making us look bad. We better quicken our game." So she keeps us on our toes and she has always kept a very, very clear idea in her mind of what we are trying to achieve. And she has brought a passion and an energy that certainly we are going to need. But it is a passion and an energy that gives us confidence that we will succeed.

So it is a great privilege that I am here today at this Philippine Tourism Convergence Reception. And once again congratulations to everyone in the DOT for the work that you have already begun– [applause] that is the dedication that you have shown. [applause]

The listening tours that you have conducted are a very imaginative tool that– are a perfect embodiment of our desire to connect with each other. And through these tours, you have exhibited the best way for us to unite and address the biggest concerns: seeing the perspective of those who are on the ground and understanding their experiences and situations.

[00:11:08]

The approach that the Department of Tourism has taken in empowering the local government units --- again it comes from the experience of our Secretary, as mayor of Liloan, of a town in Cebu --- and to do this with the partnership of all stakeholders and to include the LGUs, private sector, LGUs. This is precisely the kind of partnership that we have been endorsing, that we have been espousing. Because it is my belief and I think it is slowly being borne out that that is the way to leverage whatever it is that you can do and to bring in other elements, other stakeholders; anyone who can contribute to gain that synergy which you all hope to gain so that our efforts will be met with success.

The avenues that have opened for all regions will be instrumental not only in formulating the best policies, but also in determining better practices and the best projects for the industry. We fully understand how tourism can drive our social, our economic recovery especially in the countryside, given the majestic and natural wonders and exciting man-made sites that we have within the Philippines.

Following the pandemic, we need fresh and new ideas to bring back the imagination and confidence of our people --- from here and abroad --- so they will be encouraged to explore the best destinations that the country can offer. Allow me to repeat that under this administration, the government will remain committed to ensuring that the inputs you have acquired from your listening tours will be optimized for the benefit of the sector. We want one of the key players in our nation's progress to be buzzing once again with life stronger than ever so that they will be able to keep up with these fast moving times.

Seeing that the various stakeholders of the tourism sector and representatives from other related industries and businesses are here, it is well recognized how this event provides a perfect opportunity to talk to one another, to network and to expand our plans for the future. All of you who have been and will continue to be partners with the Department of Tourism will be influential in achieving our goal to revitalize this sector.

Thank you all for coming tonight. Thank you for your presence. I look forward to the roles that you will play, that we will play together in ensuring the progress and recovery of our tourism industry. It is my hope that this reception will foster meaningful discourse and yield concrete plans that we can immediately put into action. It is my desire that genuine and sincere collaborations such as this will be part of this activity.

[00:14:34]

I wish that initiatives for greater tourism connectivity and convenience will be pursued after this event and I know that it will because I agree and I know that I have spoken to many of you that we are together and of like mind when we think about that, that is what we would like to achieve for our people.

Again, my congratulations to all of you, especially to the DOT for the great start that you have made, to the Secretary of the Department of Tourism, for your energy, your passion and your continuing belief in the tourism industry in the Philippines.

And let us keep going. I believe and I am certain in my heart that if we work together properly, if we continue from this very good start and we continue that trajectory which we have started in the last a hundred plus days, that we will succeed and to the benefit of our people and our country.

Thank you very much. Magandang gabi po sa inyong lahat at marami pong salamat. [applause]

[00:15:53]

* * *