

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH DURING THE 9TH YEAR COMMEMORATION
OF SUPER TYPHOON YOLANDA**

Holy Cross Memorial Garden, Tacloban City, Leyte
November 8, 2022

Thank you, Speaker Martin Romualdez, for your kind words — hh, please take your seats — kind words and introduction.

The mayor, our mayor — our Yolanda mayor at mayor siya noon — Mayor Alfred Romualdez, who for — kami ni Martin for three days starting on the Saturday, Saturday nag-usap pa tayo, Friday? Saturday nag-usap pa tayo maaga hindi ba mga six o'clock? And then after that, we did not hear from the mayor anymore, and Martin and I walang balita. We didn't know if he was dead or alive. Until I saw him in the airport nung bumaba na, sumalubong siya. That was the condition that we were in.

So, I'd like to also greet the Tingong Party-list Representative Jude Acidre; all my fellow workers in government; the members of the diplomatic corps, who must have a sterling mention for all the help and assistance that your countries came to Tacloban with, came to Samar with, came to all — even all the way to Ormoc, all the way to Cebu who took... Where I felt like you were Leyteños yourselves, that you were Filipinos yourselves. The compassion that you showed, and the generosity that you showed, and the energy that you put into the rescue work for our people and subsequently, the rehabilitation that you helped with after the rescue work. And for that, we here, not only Tacloban but all of the places, all of the areas, and which Yolanda wreaked havoc, we all thank you, very, very much. [applause]

Also, of particular mention I would have to be — the NGOs that came not only from the UN but from the different NGOs who just arrived here without us calling, who just arrived and offered to help with their particular offers of help. One NGO would offer fuel; another NGO would offer shelter; another NGO would offer cash-for-work; another would bring reconstruction materials.

All of this out of the generosity of your own heart once again. Many people owe their lives to you and for that, we cannot thank you enough. [applause] And all of us from Leyte that --- and all my fellow workers in government, good afternoon.

It is sometimes asked when we do have a commemoration of this kind, they say, "Why do we commemorate Yolanda still after nine years?"

Those whose families had a loss from their families of a loved one have learned to live with that grief. And although we continue to feel sad, life has gone on for them. So why continue? Why bring it up?

I come here because I must commemorate those uncounted dead that up to now we do not know how many that number is. We must come to these commemorations so that we will remember those who we were told not to remember.

If you remember during the count of the casualties, the count was stopped. And we knew that there were still thousands out there. And for those thousands, those countless thousands, we come here, we commemorate. Because if we no longer commemorate, their memory dies. And it is only up to us to keep that memory alive. Because as I said, in a way, we were told to forget about them. And we will not forget about them. And we cannot forget about them. And I know you do not forget about them.

That is why we continue to commemorate Yolanda and we continue to grieve our dead. Because we not only grieve the dead that are here, but we also grieve for those who we do not even know how many they are, who they are, and where they are. And for that, the tragedy of Yolanda continues.

And furthermore, I think it is important that we come to these commemorations because it is also a demonstration, a manifestation of the strength and the courage of Filipinos. To remind ourselves that Filipinos are brave, that Filipinos are kind and that Filipinos will conquer all especially if it is for their community, for their families and for the land that they love.

And now to see Tacloban which has, in fact, we have been hearing this phrase for a long time, this “build back better.” Tacloban has built back better. And it is a wondrous sight to see. And it always gives us hope that even if there are tragedies and disasters in other places, we know the Filipino spirit will never be quelled. The Filipino spirit will always burn bright and bring back normal life to their communities. That is what we commemorate.

So, these are the different elements that we were thinking of as we were going through the relief and rescue process just after Yolanda. Is that what happens to all these people? How will we ever recover from this? Well, again, because of that Filipino spirit, that is how we have recovered from this.

And I think that it is appropriate that at this juncture, I invite you to rise and to have a minute of silence. Not only for those loved ones who are here behind us, but also for those who have been taken away from us and who we will never forget.

[moment of silence]

Thank you all and good afternoon. [applause]

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