

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s  
SPEECH AT THE FOREST FOR LIFE: 160<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE PHILIPPINE FORESTRY SERVICE  
(PHILIPPINE ENVIRONMENT MONTH)**

DENR Compound, Visayas Avenue, Quezon City  
June 26, 2023

[00:00:00]

Thank you very much our DENR Secretary, Secretary Maritoni Yulo-Loyzaga.

Please take your seats.

House Speaker, Congressman Martin Romualdez; Senator Cynthia Villar; my fellow workers in government; other distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

Allow me to congratulate the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on celebrating the Philippine Environment Month, the Philippine Arbor Day and the 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Philippine Forestry Service.

Today, I am reminded of the tree-planting activity that we conducted on my birthday last year. And I remember stressing how vital trees are to our existence and how taking care of the environment redounds to the benefit of the present and more importantly future generations.

All of these thoughts led me to wonder: how often --- if at all --- do our citizens consciously think of our ecology and resources? Stuck in our day-to-day routines, is it possible for us to treat the needs of the Earth at the same level of importance as our own needs?

Yet, one thing is certain: Our role as custodian of mother earth holds much value, especially when united in terms of purpose and of direction.

The Philippine Forestry Service --- now the Forest Management Bureau --- has been on top of protecting and conserving our forests since 1863.

And as such, it is only right that we commemorate your anniversary to further inspire progress in preserving our trees and our forests in these coming years.

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Recognizing the urgent call for environmental preservation, my father declared every 5<sup>th</sup> day of June as World Environment Day in our country. This act was an act of unity with the international community to raise awareness and take steps towards environmental protection and sustainability.

Having observations like these are critical in nurturing a deeper consciousness amongst our people in preserving the environment, as well as in addressing the problems caused by climate change and the centuries of mismanaged resources. The protection and rehabilitation of biodiversity within and around our shores will be immensely influential in shaping our destiny as a nation.

This administration is committed in ensuring environmental integrity and sustainability for the benefit of our present and future generations.

I continue to call on the DENR, other agencies, the private sector and even the public to work together in protecting, preserving and managing our limited resources.

I challenge everyone to carry a deep sense of pride and ownership of the lands that will continue to nurture and feed our nation for generations to come.

The world that we have today and that we face is a very different world from what we came into. And the importance of the environment, the importance of biodiversity has become clearer and clearer.

We have had many warnings over decades by scientists and saying that unless we change our habits, unless we change our lack of sensitivity to our environment, there will be global warming, there will be climate change.

Unfortunately, we did not listen. And now, we are resigned to the one and a half degrees Celsius increase in our global temperature. And perhaps that might even reach two degrees Celsius if we do not do something about it.

And that is why we in the Philippines must be very, very conscious. I must say that I think that Filipinos in general are more aware about the

importance of preserving our natural resources, about preserving our forest, about preserving our biodiversity.

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And the benefits that will come, not only to our effort to be part of the solution to the effects of climate change, but also because Filipinos are the most vulnerable to climate change that we have. And what is the answer to this problem? The answer to this problem is our forestland. And now the change that has come, the different changes that have come in the international economy have now put the...

They started with the determination of damage and loss for us, for us developing countries, from the developing countries as they take responsibility for the industrial revolution that brought about these emissions, carbon emissions, into the air. And that started it off.

But now, it has entered into the business community where we are now able to put a peso value to our forestland. We are able to determine that this can be in exchange for carbon emissions in another place. And these are the kind of strategies, these are the kind of new concepts that are being developed so that we can be very clear and make it easy for those who are the --- those who are taking care of our forestlands to feel not only a benefit for doing the right thing but also an economic benefit.

As long as people have a sense of ownership, as long as people have a sense of belonging and being a part of that system of preserving the forest, and addition to that, that we are able to show an economic benefit, then I know Filipinos will do everything that they can to preserve our ecology, to preserve our forestland, to preserve our biodiversity.

This is a concept that we developed --- if you remember those in the forestry, I am sure that you will remember that the biggest ADB finance project of the FDPIN was in Ilocos Norte. And the way that we structured it was simply to say having planted all the trees that we were going to plant --- nag-watershed development kami, gumawa kami ng mga cooperative para sa planting. And the only way that we were able to guarantee that this will be a self-sustaining program, that once we leave, that those locals who live in those areas will actually take care of those trees was to give them a sense of ownership. And we did this simply by saying: "These trees are yours. It is up to you to take care of them. It is up to you to use them."

And I am happy to be able to report that those trees up to now are growing, are strong and are continuing to cover a great deal of our forestland and now also the watershed developments that we had started.

It is a model that we have to start --- that might be a template. But it is only a beginning, a starting point because there are so many different factors in play now that we have to be conscious about. To make sure that we are able to take full advantage of the resources that are available to us to preserve our forestland and to give that sense of ownership to our people so that they will do everything that they can to protect what in essence belongs to them.

I am certain that if we take care of it, mother nature will take care of us in return and give us the capacity to grow and flourish in a brighter and more prosperous future that we all dream about.

Maraming, maraming salamat sa inyong serbisyo. Maraming, maraming salamat.

Mabuhay ang ating mga foresters! Mabuhay ang DENR! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! [applause]

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