

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH AT THE OATH-TAKING CEREMONY OF THE NEWLY-
ELECTED FOUR-L PHIL'S N.E.B.
AND REGIONAL PRESIDENTS**

President's Hall, Malacañan Palace
December 12, 2023

[00:00:00]

Well, of course, to our newly elected officers of the Lady Local Legislators League, or FOUR-L of the Philippines, Incorporated and, of course, my fellow workers in government. I don't know why we should be so formal. Magkakilala naman tayong lahat.

Ladies, first of all, welcome to Malacañan Palace and I am very, very happy to be here to preside over this oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected National Executive Board and Regional Presidents of the Lady Local Legislators League of the Philippines or FOUR-L Philippines.

I congratulate all the new officials that will lead our efforts once again to champion and protect the rights and the welfare of women, of children and of families. Women leaders play an indispensable role in the vital task of nation building. These roles are enshrined not only in the constitution, but also in the legislation passed by Congress. And perhaps, even more importantly, these roles are very much part of Philippine culture.

I always explain to my friends from different countries that you might think that the Philippines is a macho society. The truth of the matter is we are a matriarchal society. And iyong mga lalaki lang ang maiingay at saka lagi naghaharap but the ones that are really always steady in the work of supporting our families, our communities, our children, nandiyan lagi ang ating mga kababaihan. And they form the bedrock.

That's why --- I don't know if you have heard this story before. I remember very well, late mga 70s, 80s, I was with my mother in the United States. And that was the height of the beginnings of the feminist movement. And my mother was asked and he said, "Madam First Lady, Imelda Marcos, what does the Philippines think of the feminist movement and the equality between the sexes?"

[00:02:52]

And my mother said, "Well, you know, I have to say that if you make me equal with men in the Philippines, it's a demotion [laughter] because we are already put up on a pedestal. We are already the ones that run the show." And, you know, it's very funny to relate and to remember, but it's really true. That's really the very best that we really are very much in that cultural mold. Vice Gov Cecil will attest to that.

For example, in Ilocos, kami iyong mga Ilocano, we are supposed to be the matatapang, the stoic types, et cetera, et cetera. But in the Ilocano tradition, for example, when I was governor there, 'pag nagbabayad kami ng sahod, hindi namin binibigay sa empleyadong lalaki. Binibigay namin sa asawa. And iyong asawa ang magbibigay ng allowance doon sa lalaki. Eh ganoon talaga.

But that really always has been the tradition and the cultural bent that has been part of the Filipino tradition. And although maybe I would not go as far as to say what my good friend once said. He reminded us of the saying that behind every great man, there is an even greater woman. Sabi niya, well, if that is the logic, the more great women behind the man, the better. Sabi ko hindi siguro iyon applicable dito sa Pilipinas. [chuckles]

But that really is the very important place that women play in our society. And sometimes that is why it was very easy for us when the issues of gender equality, the issues of all of these. Now that perhaps in the newer civilizations, they are only starting to discover. We immediately scored very, very high in terms of that simply because that has always been part of Filipino culture. And that is why we count very much.

Again, si Vice-Governor says will attest to this. When I was governor also in Ilocos Norte, of course, we had the male mayors and the female mayors. And after a while, miniting ko iyong mga lalaki. Sabi ko, you guys better pick up your game, napapahiya tayo dito sa mga babae because they're doing better work. And, you know, there's very much, there's very much a point to that. And that's why we, it is very, very --- when the issues, like I said, of gender equality came up, napakadali para sa Pilipino para maunawaan iyon. We all hold our mothers, our sisters, our grandmothers, our aunts in high regard, in the sense that we basically are formed by the women in our culture. And that applies to government as well.

In terms of government and the parts and the roles that you play, that is very still very much the case. And we are still the bigophone, the noisy ones. Kami iyong nagpapasikat, nag-iingay. But the steady work is very much done by the women in the background. [applause] And that I think is something that v--- I don't know any Filipino who will who will contradict me in those terms.

[00:07:26]

So I have great hopes as officers and members of the Four-L Philippines that you will continue to work for the passage of in our work, local legislative measures that aim to improve the lives of our people, especially the vulnerable.

Let's embrace your commitment to conduct fair and gender responsive programs in your respective localities. We can broaden the growth opportunities and enhance the role of women in our society.

So most importantly, create a conducive and nurturing environment for women and for girls to participate freely and equally in our political, social and economic spheres. Baka dito lang tayo nagkakakulang. Giving opportunities to young girls, to women, and not somehow exclude women from and girls especially as they grow up, exclude them from certain sectors of our economy, certain sectors of our society.

However, that's changing very much. And I think that the Philippines is doing a good job with that because, again, the recognition by Filipinos that we have a supreme asset in our ladies that are Filipino— the girls, the young girls, the women who have been working very, very hard for our society all throughout our national history.

So moving forward, I hope to see more women in key leadership positions in the country. Be assured that this administration remains steadfast in implementing the Magna Carta of Women at all levels of government.

In line with this, I encourage all of you to work with us in closing the country's gender parity to improve our ranking in the Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum. We have, in fact, already achieved much in this area.

In 2023, the Philippines attained a rating of 79.1 percent in gender parity, which ranked 16th amongst 146 countries globally. [applause] Yes, applaud yourselves. That has been your achievement. Well, this distinction is something that we and especially women, should be proud of. There remains a great deal to be done to achieve our goal of gender parity.

So, let us aim to eradicate prejudice and discrimination against women in every facet of our society so we can build a Bagong Pilipinas that empowers women to be the best that they can be.

Mabuhay ang Four-L Philippines! Mabuhay ang lahat ng Pilipinang kababaihan!

Maraming, maraming salamat po! Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat! [applause].

[00:10:39]
