

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH AT THE PHILIPPINE CONSTITUTION DAY**

Makati Shangri-La Hotel, Manila
08 February 2024

[00:00:01]

Thank you, Speaker Martin Romualdez, for that very enthusiastic introduction.

Please, please take your seat.

The PHILCONSA Chairman and the retired Chief Justice, Chief Justice Reynato Puno; Manila Overseas Press Club Chairman Tony Lopez; the Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps; members of the Cabinet present here tonight; all the members of the PHILCONSA; members of the Manila Overseas Press Club; and of course, to be complete, of course and to not get into trouble, First lady of my house and of the country; [applause] my fellow workers in government; and my private sector partners; other distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen. Good evening.

It's with great pleasure to join you all today to commemorate this year's Constitution Day. My gratitude goes to the Philippine Constitution Association for its very kind invitation.

The commemoration of the Constitution Day this year comes at such a—with such propitious timing.

Certainly, it is known to everyone here that constitutional issues have recently been brought to the fore, which bear tremendous impact on our national consciousness.

I will not stand idly by, but rather, will proactively confront these issues head on. For it is my sworn duty as elected President to preserve and defend the Constitution and also to ensure that laws, especially the fundamental law of the land, are faithfully executed.

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Moreover, as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and having control and supervision over our Police Forces, I bear the paramount mandates of maintaining peace and order in our land and in preserving our national territory and security.

But these heavy responsibilities are not mine alone. The other great Branches derive their authority and mandate from the Constitution, of which the Judiciary stands as the final bulwark. Our Armed Forces and Police are equally under oath to defend our Republic and our constitutional order.

As citizens, we all have sworn to defend our country and its most cherished ideals.

Lahat tayo ay nanumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas, at sa bansang kanyang sinasagisag. Nanumpa rin tayo na ating tutuparin ang mga tungkulin ng mamamayang makabayan.

As members of PHILCONSA, you have distinctly sworn to defend, protect, and preserve the Constitution. You also vowed to propagate and promote obedience to the Constitution as an integral part of the people's adherence to law and order.

My predecessor has once declared before this august body that the Constitution is our "unifying factor." Painstakingly, our progenitors have made this pact for us to be one and united. Once we "start to destroy the Constitution, there will be a breakage in our society."

So it must be. So, we must also honor our word.

Let us not betray the sacred oath that we have made. We must safeguard our Constitution's primacy, and adhere to its provisions, procedures and precepts.

As citizens, we have inherited and assumed these for the sake of the continuity of our nation's legacy. We must then faithfully and vigilantly perform these integral civic duties of ours, lest we lay to waste the great vision and sacrifices of our heroes and our forefathers.

The new call for a separate Mindanao is doomed to fail, for it is anchored on a false premise, not to mention a sheer constitutional travesty. The current leadership of BARMM itself has repudiated this preposterous proposal. And so did the other political leaders of Mindanao.

This is because there can be, as in fact there is already, genuine and effective local autonomy throughout our country, especially in the BARMM, without compromising our national integrity in the slightest degree.

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I strongly appeal to all concerned to stop this call for a separate Mindanao. [applause] It is a grave violation of the Constitution.

Hindi ito ang Bagong Pilipinas na ating hinuhubog. Bagkus, ito ay pagwasak mismo sa ating bansang Pilipinas.

Our Constitution calls for a united, undivided country. It calls for eternal cohesion. For this reason, unlike other Constitutions, there is nothing in ours that allows the breaking up of this union, such as an “exit provision.” On the contrary, our Constitution does not recognize a right to rebellion, while our criminal laws punish it. Government has sternly enforced these laws to the letter and spirit and this administration will be no exception.

I have said it before and will say it again here. Our national territory will not be diminished, even by one square inch. [applause]

We will continue to defend it against any and all threats, external and internal. We will not allow even an iota of a suggestion of its breaking apart.

On this part of the Constitution, there is simply no “dynamism” or “flexibility.” This is my guarantee, not only throughout this term, but up to my dying breath. [applause]

Fittingly, as I said two weeks ago during the 125th anniversary of the establishment of the First Republic, a “divided Republic cannot prosper.”

It was unity that made us rise from our pandemic challenges. And under the banner of the rule of law and supremacy of our Constitution, our unity—both of our people and of our territorial domain will continue to fuel our ascent and the further pursuit of our collective goals and aspirations as a nation.

We must then galvanize our people, and rally them to preserve the Republic and everything that our Flag symbolizes—its three stars and its sun.

Huwag nating talikuran ang ating panata. Huwag nating payagang mabalewala ang lahat ng mga pinaglaban ng ating mga ninuno’t mga bayani. [applause]

Our country’s economic well-being is a distinctly important concern. Many sectors of society, particularly business, have pointed to certain economic provisions in the Constitution that inhibit our growth momentum.

Anchored on these restrictive provisions, there are laws that prohibit certain kinds of foreign investments and thus limit our economic potential and our global competitiveness.

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That is why since the 8th Congress, there have been no less than 300 measures filed in the House of Representatives calling for the amendment of these economic provisions of our Constitution. [applause]

And we must allow this healthy and democratic debate to rage on, engaging and informing the minds of our citizenry, [applause] especially since the socio-economic development of our country is directly involved. I will neither hinder this dialogue, nor encroach on the prerogatives of Congress and the sovereign will of the Filipino people.

Our bicameral Congress and our built-in system of checks-and-balances are wonders to behold. We must allow our democratic institutions and their mechanisms, made possible by our constitutional order, to take their natural course.

I want to make it clear: This administration's position in introducing reforms to our Constitution extends to economic matters alone [applause] or those strategically aimed at boosting our country's economy. Nothing more. [applause]

In any event, this administration is going to push hard to attract more foreign investments to significantly help us achieve our ambition of upper middle-class status by 2025. [applause]

Despite nearly 16 percent decrement in our net foreign direct investment inflows, our economy continues to grow and is expected to grow further by between 6 and a half to 7 and a half percent in this year, 2024. [applause]

Over the decades, PHILCONSA has stood witness to two constitutional changes and countless constitutional issues.

Dutifully, you have proven yourselves to be a proactive witness and defender of our Constitutions, past and present. It is once again being called upon for its role as the Constitution's vanguard. (applause)

So, I call to you, join me, your President and your legitimate civilian government, at the forefront in defending the sanctity of the Constitution, the territorial integrity of our country, and the sovereign will of the Filipino people. [applause]

Rest assured, as President of our great Republic, I will continue to live up to the recognition that you have bestowed upon me almost a decade ago, as a "Great Protector of the Constitution." [applause]

Mabuhay ang ating Saligang Batas! [Crowd: Mabuhay! Mabuhay!]

Mabuhay ang iisa at nagkaka-isang Bagong Pilipinas! [applause and cheers]

Maraming salamat po at magandang gabi po sa inyong lahat! [applause]
[00:11:18]
