

PGMA's Speech during the Opening Ceremony of the Coral Triangle Initiative Business Summit with the launching of the photo exhibit "New Partnership for Sustainable Growth in the Coral Triangle"

Rizal Ballroom, The Makati Shangri-la Hotel, Makati City

January 19, 2010

Thank you, Secretary Yap.

Secretary Yap together with... Department of Agriculture and Secretary Quinto of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources are the two lead Cabinet members in charge of the Coral Triangle in our country. But I'm happy that Secretary Gary Teves of the Department of Finance is also here with us today.

Chairman Vince Perez, chair of this first ever Business Summit in an ecoregion, the very first in the world. Congratulations! Vince for putting this together. Dr. Lida, who conceived of the Coral Triangle a few years ago, I understand, in Tagaytay over lechon and green mangoes. Congratulations! for where we are today.

Ladies and gentlemen, a warm welcome to the Philippines, and thank you for joining us here today.

We gather here today because of our shared commitment to sustain the viability of the world's largest and most important marine nursery and sanctuary, the Coral Triangle. Convening this business summit for the Coral Triangle Initiative is one among many activities we have this year to support the United Nation's declaration of the year 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. As a party to the Convention on Biological Biodiversity, it is our obligation to raise awareness on the importance of biodiversity conservation. Of course, all of you are stakeholders in the Coral Triangle. So, all of you know that the Coral Triangle spans a vast area of six million kilometers. Its waters wash the shores of seven nations, six of whom are members of the Coral Triangle Initiative -- Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Timor Leste and the Philippines. It also washes the shores of Brunei, whom we have invited and who has accepted to be a member of the CTI. The Coral Triangle is home to an estimated 80% of the total known species of corals. It is a major source of food not only for our countries located in the triangle but also for many other countries to whom we supply our marine products. It is likewise a significant provider of the livelihood and trade of our countries located in the triangle.

This makes it imperative for us to work together and protect and enhance the sustainable development of these shared coastal marine resources.

The Coral Triangle Initiative, as I learned last night, was conceived in Tagaytay City. But it was first officially proposed by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono at the 2007 summit of APEC. Since then, the countries involved in the CTI have approved important agreements for concerted and bilateral cooperation that will contribute to the sustainability of the Coral Triangle's resources. Each of our countries went through extensive consultations with our different constituencies to ensure that our collective plans embodied the aspirations of our people and answered the most daunting challenges we face through solutions that we will endeavor to work on together.

For this CTI's Businessmen's Summit, we aim not only to gather the businessmen's commitment to protect the Coral Triangle, but also to look for ways to support businesses and industries dependent on the resources of the Triangle. We want to show that environmental protection on the one hand, and economic growth and poverty reduction on the other hand, can co-exist side by side and mutually prosper by exploring business initiatives that support both goals.

We want to change the traditional thinking that forces us to choose between economic growth or environmental protection. We want to infect businesses throughout the world with our enthusiasm and show hard evidence that businesses can thrive, not in spite of, but because of sound environmental practices. To this end, the government of the Philippines hereby announces its support for the mainstreaming of the use of circle hooks to dramatically reduce turtle bycatch in long line fishing operations.

We thank the Philippines and other corporations who are already doing this, and we urge more to do this as well. This should be not only by our successful private tuna fishing companies, but more importantly by our small fishermen and fisherfolk groups.

We want to add our organized businessmen's voices to the growing clamor for nations, particularly the developed countries, to take more responsibility for the damage they have wrought on our environment all these past years. They must contribute more

to arrest climate change.

The Philippines is a climate taker, not a climate maker. We are buffeted by terrible typhoons and terrible droughts and yet our carbon emissions constitute less than one percent of the world's total toxic gas emissions to the atmosphere. We are not complacent about our responsibility to the environment.

The environment is in fact one of the three E's, together with Education and the Economy, of our development agenda that has been the focus of our Administration for the last nine years. We have worked hard to create a Green Philippines agenda to ensure that our economic growth is balanced with the need for environmental conservation that our growth is sustainable.

Secretary Arthur Yap in introducing me mentioned some of the important legislation we have done to promote the protection of the environment. The culmination or the latest of which is the Climate Change Act of 2009 which provides a framework for climate change planning. This includes prioritizing the issue of climate change in the national development planning process. We've also as he said, enacted the Solid Waste Management Act, the Clean Water Act. We have also enacted a Biofuels Law and a Renewable Energy Law that altogether forged a new energy and environmental policy that creates more jobs, provides a blueprint for a green, sustainable economy and decreased reliance on foreign sources of energy.

Some of our achievements include: Successfully raising our energy selfsufficiency levels from less than half in year 2000 to almost 60% today; Fruitful investment promotion in renewable energy and bio-fuels which has led to more than 3,000 new megawatts of renewable energy the past year. This may be part of why in Copenhagen, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank made available for us 250 million dollars from the Climate Technology Fund.

I mentioned this to point out that as saving the world from fossil fuels can be profitable, so also can saving the Coral Triangle be profitable.

Therefore, I call on you today to join the new breed of businessmen who believe that profit and environmental protection can co-exist. I invite you to look at the opportunities for environmentally sound business opportunities in the countries comprising the Coral Triangle. There is no other way to go for you and me.

Mabuhay! and thank you.