

His Excellency Edward Joseph Adams, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See, Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening.

Thank you for sharing your precious time with us.

Since we are all here, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly dwell on Philippine foreign policy. Under the leadership of H.E. President Benigno S. Aquino III, there are three pillars which will continue to define the course of our foreign relations - promoting national security, enhancing economic diplomacy, and protecting the rights and welfare of Filipino overseas.

These pillars will be strongly pursued under the present administration's agenda of national development and good governance.

In his inaugural speech, President Aquino said that "our foremost duty is to lift the nation from poverty through honest and effective governance." He also said that "our goal is to create jobs at home so that there will be no need to look for employment abroad."

Enhancing Economic Diplomacy

In order to achieve this twin goal of poverty alleviation and job creation, therefore, it is imperative that we prioritize economic diplomacy.

As previously stated, the DFA will be more aggressive in engaging with our traditional economic and commercial partners in East Asia, North America and Europe, and new ones in South and Central Asia, South America, the Middle East and Africa.

That practically covers everyone in this room. And I wish to thank you all in advance, Excellencies, for the very important role you will play in helping us to realize our goal.

Our economic diplomacy will be as effective only as our capacity to create a good investment climate in the country. That is why we will ensure that our economic diplomacy will be anchored to transparent, stable and predictable policies that create a domestic condition attractive to foreign investors.

By drawing investments in, we will be able to create more jobs. A good investment vehicle that the Aquino administration is pushing for is the public-private partnership with which you are all familiar.

On top of stronger bilateral relations, we shall continue to pursue cooperation with our multilateral partners. Economic diplomacy will likewise be strengthened within the purview of regional and international forums such as the ASEAN, APEC, the WTO, The World Intellectual Property Organization, UNCTAD and other United Nations bodies whose work impact our national development goals.

Protecting Our Overseas Filipino Workers

As we work on creating more jobs at home, the Department - in coordination with DOLE/POEA/OWWA - equally heeds the President's call "to be even more responsive to the needs and welfare of our overseas Filipino workers."

This was our marching order when we went to Tripoli, Tokyo, Manama, and Sana'a, where we had to see for ourselves the condition of our Filipino workers abroad, and to ensure that they are out of harm's way amidst tragedy and turmoil. We will continue to do what is necessary to send the clearest signal that the Philippine government cares for its people wherever they are.

Protecting the rights and promoting the welfare of OFWs will continue to be stronger pillar of our

foreign policy. The sheer magnitude of Filipino diaspora prompts us to pursue and enhance bilateral agreements, regional arrangements and international standards affecting migrant workers.

Promoting National Security

Promoting national security is the third but not the least pillar that the Aquino administration will continue to pursue. It is our major concern to build a safe and secure environment not only within the bounds our territory, but also regionally and globally.

The ASEAN will be a cornerstone in this endeavor. Thus, the Philippines will strengthen its bilateral relations with the member states, will rely on ASEAN in resolving its territorial disputes with other countries, and will strive for the realization of an ASEAN Community Council and its three pillars.

We will also build upon our strong defense partnership with the United States, and will engage China, India, Japan and other regional partners such as the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia in mutually beneficial security and defense dialogues.

We shall, moreover, step up our cooperation and interaction with the countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in resolving the Mindanao conflict, the Palestinian issue, global terrorism, and the ongoing unrest in the Arab world.

In our global village, the national security of one inevitably affects the security of others.

We will endeavor to reach beyond our grasp in economic diplomacy, in national security, and in the protection of the rights and welfare of Filipino overseas.

The interplay of these three pillars of Philippine foreign policy, pursued within the national

agenda laid out by President Aquino, is the framework that defines the Philippines' dealings with other countries and international organizations.

We want to create jobs by enticing investors, so that Filipinos will not have to seek employment abroad. But in the meantime, we need to protect them and promote their welfare, and in the end encourage them to go home and help in nation building. To do both, we need to have national and global security. We need a stable country where investors will feel safe and protected, we want safe and secure host nations for our Filipinos overseas, and we need access to prosperous world markets and safe maritime routes to pursue our national development goals.

Excellencies, the interplay of the three pillars, when translated into real actions, actually means the interplay of our relations.

In closing, I assure you that the foreign policy of the Aquino administration will be one of full engagement and friendship. We will work with all of you to build a world where all our peoples will enjoy the blessings of peace, prosperity and progress.

Thank you and we hope you enjoy the rest of the evening.