

Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile; Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr.; Vice President Jejomar Binay; former Presidents Fidel Valdez Ramos and Joseph Ejercito Estrada; Chief Justice Renato Corona and the honorable Justices of the Supreme Court; honorable members of the diplomatic corps; members of the House of Representatives and the Senate; Local Government Officials; members of our Cabinet; members of the Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police; to my fellow servants of the Filipino people; And to my beloved countrymen, my Bosses:

I stood before you during my inauguration and promised: we would do away with the use of the *wang-wang*. This one gesture has become the symbol of change, not just in our streets, but even in our collective attitude.

Over the years, the *wang-wang* had come to symbolize abuse of authority. It was routinely used by public officials to violate traffic laws, inconveniencing ordinary motorists - as if only the time of the powerful few, and no one else's, mattered. Instead of behaving like public servants, they acted like kings. This privilege was extended to their cronies and patrons, who moved along the streets as if they were aristocracy, indifferent to those who were forced to give way and were left behind. Abusing privilege despite promising to serve-this is the *wang-wang* mindset; this is the mindset of entitlement.

They had no right to do this. The law authorizes only the President, the Vice President, the Senate President, the Speaker, the Chief Justice, and police vehicles, fire trucks, and ambulances to use sirens in the fulfillment of their official duties-no one else. Yet the flagrant abuse we bore witness to prompts us to ask: if they felt it their privilege to flout the simplest traffic laws, how could we expect them not to help themselves to a share of projects funded by the Filipino people?

Do you want the corrupt held accountable? So do I. Do you want to see the end of *wang-wang*, both on the streets and in the sense of entitlement that has led to the abuse that we have lived with for so long? So do I. Do you want to give everyone a fair chance to improve their lot in life?

So do I.

We have fought against the *wang-wang*, and our efforts have yielded results. Just this year, the number of Filipinos who experienced hunger has come down. Self-rated hunger has gone down from 20.5% in March to 15.1% this June-equivalent to a million Filipino families who used to go hungry, but who now say they eat properly every day.

As for business, who would have thought that the stock market would reach seven record highs in the past year? At one time, we thought that for the PSE Index to reach 4,000 points would be, at best, a fluke. We now routinely exceed this threshold.

Our once low credit ratings have now been upgraded by Moody's, Standard and Poors, Fitch, and Japan Credit Ratings Agency-in recognition of our prudent use of funds and creative financial management. These improved credit ratings mean lower interest on our debts. Our innovative fiscal approach has saved taxpayers 23 billion pesos in the first four months of this year. This is enough to cover the 2.3 million conditional cash transfer beneficiaries for the entire year.

Let me remind you: in the nine and a half years before we were elected into office, our credit ratings were upgraded once, and downgraded six times by the different credit ratings agencies. Compare this to the four upgrades we have achieved in the single year we have been in office. This was no small feat, considering that the upgrades came after ratings agencies have grown considerably more conservative in their assessments, especially in the wake of criticism they received after the recent American financial crisis. But while they have downgraded the ratings of other countries, they have upgraded ours, so that we are now just one notch below investment grade. Our economic team is hard at work to sustain the momentum.

And allow me to share more good news from the Department of Energy: having rid the DOE of *wang-wang*

, we have revived the confidence of investors in our energy sector. 140 companies, all ready to participate in the exploration and strengthening of our oil and natural gas resources, can attest to this. Compare this to the last energy contracting round in 2006, which saw the participation of only 35 companies. Just last Friday, a new contract was signed for a power plant to be constructed in the Luzon grid, so that by 2014, our country will have a cheaper, more reliable source of energy.

There is confidence and there is hope; the government is now fulfilling its promises. And I cannot help but remember a woman I spoke with during one of my first house-to-house campaigns. She lamented: "It won't matter who wins these elections. Nothing will change. I was poor when our leaders campaigned, I am poor now that they are in office, and I will still be poor when they step down." This is a grievance echoed by many: "Our leaders didn't care about us then, our leaders don't care about us now, and our leaders will not care about us tomorrow."

Given the persistence of the *wang-wang* attitude, wasn't their sentiment justified? This was the attitude that allowed helicopters to be bought as if they were brand new, but had in fact already been extensively used. This was the attitude that allowed GOCC officials, like those in the Philippine National Construction Corporation, to pay themselves millions of pesos in bonuses, even as they failed to render decent service and plunged their respective agencies deeper into debt. Before they stepped down from their positions, the former heads of the PNCC gifted themselves with two hundred and thirty-two million pesos. Their franchise had lapsed in 2007; their collections should have been remitted to the national government. They did not do this, and in fact even took advantage of their positions: the bonuses they allotted to themselves in the first 6 months of 2010 was double the amount of their bonuses from 2005-2009. Yet they had the audacity to award themselves midnight bonuses, when they had already drowned their agencies in debt.

To end the *wang-wang* culture in government, we employed zero-based budgeting to review programs. For this year and the last, zero-based budgeting has allowed us to end many wasteful programs.

For example, we uncovered and stopped an ill-advised plan to dredge Laguna Lake. We would have borrowed 18.7 billion pesos to remove 12 million cubic meters of silt-which would have re-accumulated within three years, even before the debt could be fully paid. We also uncovered a food-for-school program with no proper targeting of beneficiaries, and other initiatives that were funded without apparent results. All of these were discontinued, and the funds rechanneled to more effective programs.

The budget is the clearest manifestation of the straight path upon which we tread. I say to those who would lead us astray: if you will further disadvantage the poor, do not even think about it. If all you would do is to fill your own pockets, do not even think about it. If it is not for the benefit of the Filipino people, do not even think about it.

I wish we could say that we had completely eliminated the *wang-wang* attitude, but in some

parts of our consciousness, it still persists.

It still exists in the private sector. According to the BIR, we have around 1.7 million self-employed and professional taxpayers: lawyers, doctors, businessmen who paid a total of 9.8 billion pesos in 2010. This means that each of them paid only an average of 5,783 pesos in income tax-and if this is true, then they each must have earned only 8,500 pesos a month, which is below the minimum wage. I find this hard to believe.

Today we can see that our taxes are going where they should, and therefore there is no reason not to pay the proper taxes. I say to you: it's not just the government, but our fellow citizens, who are cheated out of the benefits that these taxes would have provided.

We are holding accountable-and we will continue to hold accountable-those who practice this culture of entitlement in all government offices, as there are still some who think they can get away with it. A district in Region 4B, for example, began a project worth 300 million pesos, well beyond the 50 million pesos that district engineers can sign off on their own. But they could not leave such a potentially large payday alone.

So they cut the project up into components that would not breach the 50 million peso limit that would have required them to seek clearance from the regional and central offices. They tried to keep this system going. And often, since lump-sum funding was being used for the projects, no questions were asked about the plans or project details. They could have been spinning webs and they would have still been given the funds, so long as they knew someone in power.

Secretary Babes Singson did not let them get away with this. He removed the district engineer from his post, and suspended the awarding of the project in an effort to uncover other anomalies that may have happened. A thorough investigation of all those involved in the case is underway; we will blacklist all contractors proven to have engaged in foul play.

Because the project had to be delayed, Filipinos who would have otherwise benefited from them are still made to face unnecessary inconveniences.

These anomalies are not limited to Region 4B. We are putting an end to them. We are eliminating the patronage politics that had been prevalent in DPWH, and replacing it with a culture in which merit prevails. All projects must have work programs; we will require those involved in projects to submit well thought out plans for consideration, so that each project complements the other. We have also instituted an honest and transparent bidding process to provide equal opportunity to interested contractors.

Because of this, we have already saved 2.5 billion pesos, and expect to save 6 to 7 billion by the end of this year. The most important thing, however, is that now, we can count on well-paved roads-as opposed to the fragile pothole-ridden paths that our people had grown used to. Once, we believed that the system in the DPWH was impossible to fix; but look-it's possible, and we're fixing it.

Even in agriculture, the culture of *wang-wang* once persisted. Before we came into office in 2010, the Philippines imported 2.3 million metric tons of rice, which was already a million metric tons more than the 1.3 million that we needed. We even had to pay extra for warehouses to store the rice acquired through excessive importation.

How many years have we been over-importing rice? Many Filipinos thought that there was nothing we could do about it.

We proved them wrong in the span of a year. What was once an estimated yearly shortage of 1.3 million metric tons is down to 660,000-that's almost half of the original amount. Even with our buffer of 200,000 metric tons as contingency against natural calamities, it is still significantly less than what was once the norm.

Our success in this sector was not brought about by mere luck. This is simply the result of doing things right: using the most effective types of seedlings, and careful and efficient spending on irrigation. In the past year, we irrigated an additional 11,611 hectares of fields, not to mention the near 212,000 hectares of land we were able to rehabilitate. The result: a 15.6 percent increase in rice production.

We envision two things: first, an end to over-importation that only serves to benefit the selfish few. Second: we want rice self-sufficiency-that the rice served on every Filipino's dinner table is

planted here, harvested here, and purchased here.

Let us look back on the situations of many of our policemen a year ago. The average salary of a common PO1 in Metro Manila is around 13,000 pesos. Around 4,000 pesos or about a third of their salaries goes directly to paying the rent. Another third goes to food, and the final third is all that is left for electricity and water bills, commuting, tuition fees, medicine, and everything else. Ideally, their salaries match their expenses-but this is not always the case. Those whose salaries are not enough would probably resort to taking out some loans. What happens when the interest piles up and they end up having to spend even more of their salaries? Will they still be able to do the right thing when tempted with an opportunity to make a quick buck?

This is why, this July, we have followed through on the housing promise we made in February. We were able to award 4,000 Certificates of Entitlement to Lot Allocation. This is only the first batch of the 21,800 houses we will have constructed by the end of the year. Awarding our men in uniform these houses will turn their 4,000 peso rent expense into an initial 200 peso per month payment for a house that is all theirs. The cash they once paid for rent can now be used for other needs.

I hear that there are still more than a thousand houses left, so for our policemen and our soldiers who have not yet submitted their papers, this is the last call for this batch of houses. But do not worry, because this housing program will continue next year, covering even more people and more regions. The NHA is already preparing the sites for housing projects in Visayas and Mindanao, with an expanded list of beneficiaries that will also include employees of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and of the Bureau of Fire Protection.

Speaking of security, does enhanced security not also enhance our national pride? There was a time when we couldn't appropriately respond to threats in our own backyard. Now, our message to the world is clear: What is ours is ours; setting foot on Recto Bank is no different from setting foot on Recto Avenue.

At times I wonder if the stories about some of our past stand-offs are true-that when cannons were aimed at our marines, they could only reciprocate by cutting down a coconut tree, painting it black, and aiming it back. True or not, that time is over. Soon, we will be seeing capability upgrades and the modernization of the equipment of our armed forces. At this very moment, our very first Hamilton Class Cutter is on its way to our shores. We may acquire more vessels in the future-these, in addition to helicopters and patrol crafts, and the weapons that the AFP, PNP,

and DOJ will buy in bulk to get a significant discount. This goes to show how far we can go with good governance; we can buy equipment at good prices, without having to place envelopes in anyone's pockets.

We do not wish to increase tensions with anyone, but we must let the world know that we are ready to protect what is ours. We are also studying the possibility of elevating the case on the West Philippine Sea to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, to make certain that all involved nations approach the dispute with calm and forbearance.

Our efforts to enhance the capabilities of our men and women in uniform are already succeeding. In the first six months of 2010, we had 1,010 cases of car and motorcycle theft. Compare that to the 460 cases in the first six months of 2011. Unfortunately, it is the one or two high-profile cases that make the headlines, and not the bigger picture-the fact that there is a large drop in car and motorcycle thefts, and that we have returned a higher percentage of stolen cars to their rightful owners.

And here is another example of positive change in law enforcement. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act was signed in 2003. Unfortunately, because the government did not properly implement it, only 29 individuals were convicted in a period of seven years. In just one year, we have breached that amount, convicting 31 human traffickers. Perhaps, this is the "sea change" that US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was referring to; and because of this change, the Philippines has been taken off the Tier 2 Watchlist of their Trafficking in Persons Report. If we had not been removed from this watchlist, the assistance we have been receiving from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, among others, would have been jeopardized.

Allow me to talk about jobs now. Our foremost pledge to the Filipino people was to create more jobs, and we have delivered. In April 2010, the unemployment rate was at 8%; in April 2011, it was at 7.2%.

To put things into perspective: We must all remember that the ranks of the unemployed represent a moving target. Every year, thousands of fresh graduates join the ranks of job hunters. Last year, the number of unemployed Filipinos in our labor force grew after many of our countrymen who earned a temporary living from election-related jobs-the people assigned to hanging buntings, the people tasked with clearing a path for politicians in crowds of people, the drivers, and other campaign staff-were laid off. But, despite all this, our results make our success evident: one million and four hundred thousand jobs were created last year.

Before, our foremost ambition was to work in another country. Now, the Filipino can take his pick. As long as he pursues his dreams with determination and diligence, he can realize them.

The number of jobs generated in our country can only grow from here. According to the Philjobnet website, every month there are 50,000 jobs that are not filled because the knowledge and skills of job seekers do not match the needs of the companies. We will not allow this opportunity to go to waste; at this very moment, DOLE, CHED, TESDA, and DepEd are working together to address this issue. Curricula will be reviewed and analyzed to better direct them to industries that are in need of workers, and students will be guided so that they may choose courses that will arm them with the skills apt for vacant jobs.

Despite the demand for these jobs, there are still people who are being left behind. What do we do with them? First, we identified the poorest of the poor, and invested in them, because people are our greatest resource. Of the two million families registered with the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, 1.6 million are already receiving their conditional cash transfers. Through the initiative and leadership of Secretary Dinky Soliman, we have been able to give much needed assistance to an average of more than 100,000 families per month. I am optimistic that we will reach our target of 1.3 million additional beneficiaries this year. With a compliance rate of 92%, millions of mothers are already getting regular check-ups at public health centers, millions of babies are being vaccinated against common diseases, and millions of school-aged children are now attending classes.

With these significant early results, I am counting on the support of the Filipino people and Congress to expand our Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program. Before the end of 2012, we want to invest in the future of 3 million poor families.

We are giving these poor families a chance to improve their lives, because their progress will be the country's progress. How can they buy products and services from businesses if they do not have a proper income? When a poor father turns to crime in order to feed his family, who would he victimize, if not us? When people cannot properly take care of themselves and fall ill, do we not run the risk of getting sick as well?

We are laying down the foundations for a brighter future for the poor. For example, in the health sector: PhilHealth beneficiaries increased during elections, as the agency was used as a tool for



dispensing political patronage. Today, we identify beneficiaries through the National Household Targeting System, to make sure that the 5.2 million Filipino families who benefit from PhilHealth are those who really need it.

Let us turn our attention to the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. The politics there have been dominated by horse-trading and transactional politics. During national elections, whoever is in power in ARMM is free to manipulate the electoral machinery in his region, ensuring that non-allies do not get votes. That Mayor or Governor then demands payment for his services come the ARMM election, and it is the administration's turn to manipulate the electoral machinery to secure the win of their candidate.

According to the Commission on Audit, in the office of the regional governor of ARMM, eighty percent of the funds disbursed were for cash advances that cannot be justified. If those funds had not gone to waste, a child could have gone to school. Instead, we built ghost bridges to reach ghost schools where only ghost teachers went to work.

We want ARMM to experience the benefits of good governance. And so, the solution: Synchronization-candidates in ARMM will run at the same time as candidates in other parts of the country. There would be less opportunity for them to employ command votes for political patrons. The result would be fairer elections. Thank you to Congress for passing the law synchronizing ARMM with the national elections.

And why do we need to postpone the elections? Because, in their desire to return to or retain power, many are prepared to engage in corrupt practices just to win again. Imagine if we had listened to the critics, and allowed the election to proceed under these circumstances. We would have perpetuated the endless cycle of electoral fraud and official abuse that has led ARMM to become one of the poorest regions in the country.

I do not doubt that the reforms we are putting in place will yield concrete results. When we talk about the straight and righteous path, we talk about that new road that was built in Barangay Bagumbayan in Sta. Maria, Laguna. When we say clean government, we are talking about the clean water that residents in Barangay Poblacion in Ferrol, Romblon now enjoy. When we refer to the light of change, we also refer to the electricity that now powers light bulbs in Barangay San Marcos in Bunawan, Agusan del Sur. This is happening in many other places, and we will make it happen everywhere in our country.

Government agencies are now focused on realizing this; they are working together to creatively solve the problems that have long plagued our country.

Have we not had flooding problems, which we know are caused by the incessant and illegal cutting down of trees? The old solution: A tree-planting photo opportunity, whose sole beneficiaries are politicians who want to look good. They plant trees, but they do not ensure that the trees would remain standing after they leave.

One of the possible solutions we are studying is to make the stewardship of these trees beneficial to communities. They will be given coffee and cacao seeds to plant. While they wait for harvest, they will receive stipends for safeguarding the trees planted to mitigate flooding. We are looking at informal settlers, who are currently crammed into our cities, as possible beneficiaries of this program. We will be investing in the people, even as we invest in the environment.

Who could have thought that little over a year ago, we could accomplish this? Today, we dream; one day soon, these dreams will be a reality.

This same creativity is in display with the innovations that are already being implemented. We have developed low-cost traps that kill mosquito larvae, probably contributing to the nearly fourteen percent decrease in dengue incidents; coconut coir fibers that are normally just disposed of have been used as a cost-effective way to strengthen our roads; we have landslide sensors that warn when soil erosion has reached dangerous levels; we have developed early flood warning systems for riverside communities. All of these are products of Filipino creativity.

DOST and UP have even teamed up to develop a prototype monorail system, which could potentially provide a home grown mass transport solution that would cost us as little as 100 million pesos per kilometer, much cheaper than the current cost of similar mass transit systems. The potential savings could result in more kilometers of cheap transport, decongesting our urban centers and allowing rural communities easier access to centers of commerce and industry.

Let me reiterate: These proposals were developed by Filipinos for Filipinos. Do you remember the time when we were unable to even dream of these kinds of projects? I am telling you now: We can dream about them, we are capable of achieving them, and we will achieve them. Isn't it great to be a Filipino living in these times?

All of these things we are doing will be wasted if we do not do something to end the culture of corruption.

To my colleagues in public service, from those at the top and to every corner of the bureaucracy: Do we not feel the pride that working in government now brings? That, now, we are proud to be identified as workers in government? Will we waste this honor?

I call on our Local Government Units: Those of you who are in the best position to understand the needs of your constituents can expect greater freedom and empowerment. But we trust that in providing for your communities, you will remain committed to the straight path, and will not lose sight of the interest of the whole nation.

For instance, there are some municipalities that want to tax the electricity transmission lines that run through their jurisdictions. Although this will augment local coffers, the rest of the Filipino people will have to deal with higher electricity rates. Let us try to balance the interests of our constituencies with that of the nation as a whole.

It is imperative that our programs remain in sync, because the progress of the entire country will also redound to progress for your communities. Let us do away with forward planning that only looks as far as the next election, and think of the long-term national good.

Ultimately, we have to unite and work together towards this progress. I thank the Congress for passing laws regarding GOCC Governance, ARMM Synchronization, Lifeline Electricity Rates Extension, Joint Congressional Power Commission Extension, Children and Infants' Mandatory Immunization, and Women Night Workers.

Last year, Congress demonstrated their support by approving the budget even before the year

ended. The timely passage of the budget allowed projects to be implemented more quickly. Tomorrow we will deliver to Congress our budget proposal for 2012. I look forward once again to its early passage so that we can build on our current momentum.

We have already made progress, but we must remember: This is only the beginning, and there is much left for us to do. Allow me to present to Congress some of the measures that will bring us closer to the fulfillment of our pledge to the nation.

We aim to give due compensation to the victims of Martial Law; to grant our house help the salaries and benefits that they deserve; and to improve the system that awards pensions to our retired soldiers. We likewise support the expansion of the scope of scholarships granted by DOST to outstanding yet underprivileged students; the advancement of universal quality healthcare; the responsible management of the environment; and the formation of facilities that will ensure the safety of our citizens during times of great need and calamity.

Our agenda also includes the development of BuCor, NBI, NEA, and PTV 4, so that, instead of lagging behind the times, they will better fulfill their mandate of public service.

Not everything we want to do will be explained today, but I invite you to read the budget message, which contains a more comprehensive plan for the coming year.

Some of my critics say that I take this campaign against corruption personally. It's true: doing what's right is personal. Making people accountable-whoever they may be-is personal. It should be personal for all of us, because we have all been victimized by corruption.

What is wrong remains wrong, regardless of how long it has been allowed to persist. We cannot simply let it pass. If we ignore the crimes of the past, they will continue to haunt us. And if we do not hold people accountable, then they will do it again and again.

The truth is, we have uncovered so many anomalies. In PAGCOR, the previous management apparently spent one billion pesos on coffee alone. At one hundred pesos per cup, that would be ten million cups of coffee over the last several years. Where did all that coffee go? Who

drank it? Perhaps we can find the people who consumed all that coffee and ask if they have been able to sleep in the last few years.

When the new Ombudsman, former Supreme Court Justice Conchita Carpio-Morales, takes office, we will have an honest-to-goodness anti-corruption office, not one that condones the corruption and abuses in government. I expect that this year, we will have filed our first major case against the corrupt and their accomplices. And these will be real cases, with strong evidence and clear testimonies, which will lead to the punishment of the guilty.

We are aware that the attainment of true justice does not end in the filing of cases, but in the conviction of criminals. I have utmost confidence that the DOJ is fulfilling its crucial role in jailing offenders, especially in cases regarding tax evasion, drug trafficking, human trafficking, smuggling, graft and corruption, and extrajudicial killings.

We are not leaving anything to chance; good governance yields positive results. Think about it: We have realized our promise of providing the public with the services that it needs and implementing programs to help the poor without having to raise our taxes.

This has always been the plan: to level the playing field; to stop the abuse of authority; and to ensure that the benefits of growth are available to the greatest number.

We have put an end to the culture of entitlement, to *wang-wang*: along our roads, in government, in our society as a whole. This will bring confidence that will attract business; this will also ensure that the people's money is put in its rightful place: Funding for infrastructure that will secure the sustained growth of the economy, which will then give rise to jobs, and public service that guarantees that no one will be left behind. More opportunities for livelihood will be opened by tourism; the strengthening of our agriculture sector will ensure that every Filipino will have food on his table. We will invest on those who were once neglected. All this will create a cycle wherein all available jobs are filled, and where businesses flourish through the empowerment of their consumers.

I am aware that, until now, there are still a few who complain about our style of governance. But you have seen our style, and its ensuing results. You have seen their style, and, especially, where that took us. Anyone with their eyes open can clearly see which is right.

We are steering our government in a clear direction. A country where opportunity is available; where those in need are helped; where everyone's sacrifices are rewarded; and where those who do wrong are held accountable.

I remember a woman warning me during the campaign: "Noy, be careful, you will be stepping on many toes."

Sometimes, I do worry about what I am doing. But I am heartened because you are with me, and we stand on the side of what is right.

I thank the priests and bishops who have continued to dialogue with us, like Cardinals Rosales and Vidal. Cardinal Rosales and I may not be the closest of friends, but I believe that he did all that he could to reduce the tensions between the church and the government. The election of Archbishop Palma, defender of human rights and of the environment, as head of the CBCP only bolsters my confidence that the state and the clergy will be able to engage each other in a positive manner. I likewise thank my Cabinet, who have sacrificed their personal comfort to fulfill the national agenda. I give special mention to PAGASA, who now truly delivers reliable advice and warnings during times of calamity.

And to those who may resist the change we are trying to bring about, this I say to you: I know what I must do, and my personal interests are nothing when compared to the interests of the nation. There are many of us who want what is right for this country; and there are more of us than you. To those of you who would turn back the tide of reform: you will not succeed.

To those who have chosen to tread the straight and righteous path alongside us: it is you who created this change, and it is you who will bequeath our success to your children. To the jeepney driver plying his route; to the teachers and students coming home from class; to the artists whose work inspires our sense of nationhood; to our policemen, our soldiers, our street sweepers, and our firemen; to you who work with honor, in the Philippines, in the oceans, or in other countries; our colleagues in government who stand steadfast with us, whatever province you come from, whatever party you belong to; every Filipino listening to me now-you made this happen.

You created a government that truly works for you. We still have five years left to ensure that we will not return to what once was. We will not be derailed, especially now that what we have begun has yielded so many positive results.

If you see a loophole in the system, do not take advantage of it. Let us not acquire through patronage what we can acquire through hard work. No more cheating, no more taking advantage of others, no more one-upmanship-because in the end we will all realize our shared aspirations.

Let us end the culture of negativism; let us uplift our fellow Filipinos at every opportunity. Why are there people who enjoy finding fault in our country, who find it so hard-as though it were a sin-to say something nice? Can we even remember the last time we praised a fellow Filipino?

Let us stop pulling our fellow man down. Let us put an end to our crab mentality. Let us make the effort to recognize the good that is being done.

If you see something right, do not think twice-praise it. If you see a policeman directing traffic, coatless beneath the rain-go to him and say, "Thank you."

If you fall sick, and you see your nurse caring for you, when she could easily be treating foreigners for a higher salary-say, "Thank you."

Before you leave school for home, approach your teacher who chose to invest in your future-say, "Thank you."

If you chance upon your local leader on a road that was once riddled with holes, but is now smooth and sturdy-go to him and say, "Thank you, for the change you have brought."

And so, to the Filipino nation, my Bosses who have steered us toward this day: Thank you very much for the change that is now upon us.

The Philippines and the Filipino people are, finally, truly alive.