

PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S MESSAGE IN CELEBRATION OF THE 110TH PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY

My fellow Filipinos and friends of the Philippines -- *Mabuhay!*

I greet you from the grand hall of the Malacañan Palace Museum on this 110th Anniversary of our Declaration of Independence.

A century and a decade ago today, our revolutionary forefathers braved superior arms and the privations of war to break the chains of colonialism and stand proud among the free nations of the world, Asia's first republic.

Today, as we celebrate with pride that historic moment, we take stock of what we as a nation have achieved with unity, audacity, sacrifice and patriotism, and we look forward with hope, to what we shall claim for our national future.

Our vision is based on a strong and growing economy. It is the central pillar we have labored to create to help guarantee peace, order and stability in our country. Our labor is paying off: last year we had the strongest economy in over 30 years, investments are surging and we are close to balancing our budget.

True to our heritage of freedom, we staunchly protect and strengthen the vibrant democracy that we have restored twenty-two years ago. Our political discourse is vibrant, our press is free, our Constitution shelters all who seek its protection and embrace the rule of law.

We have tackled our unfortunate legacy of political violence whether it is in the Philippines or abroad with foreign leaders and human rights organizations. We have met with a lot of success since the formation of what was to become the Melo Commission. Extrajudicial killings are down and prosecutions are up. We will not be satisfied until we are at zero, but we are making progress.

We have made tough and politically unpopular decisions to raise revenues and crack down on smugglers so that we could invest in our physical infrastructure and in our people.

We are delivering investments in three critical areas, what we call the "three E's," namely: the Economy, the Environment and Education. These issues are central to lifting our nation up and getting it ready for the next generation of leaders.

The results of our efforts come none too soon. There are global clouds on the horizon that are driving up the price of oil and food, particularly rice.

Thankfully, we are now in a vastly improved position to weather this storm than at any other time in recent memory.

Our people are enterprising and welcomed everywhere, as quick learners and hardworkers who are also generous of spirit to strangers and friends alike. As our

countrymen and women build successful careers and prosperous lives all over the world, foreign investors and travelers flock to our islands eager to harness Filipino talent, enjoy Filipino hospitality, and marvel at the beauty and grandeur of 7,108 magnificent Philippine islands. Our archipelago shelters us all -- Filipinos, foreigners, and compatriots across the world warmed by memories of your homeland.

With solidarity, sacrifice and singular purpose, our heroes brought forth a new nation. With the same love of country binding all Filipinos, we too shall achieve for the Philippines and all its peoples the blessings of freedom, justice and progress, and our esteemed place among the great nations of the world.

We remain bullish on our country, optimistic about our future and deeply committed to being a force for good.

In this march to our collective tomorrow I ask all of you to join as one – for our motherland, for our families, and for the generations to come.

Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!