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SENATE

Journal of the Senate

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION
2022 - 2023

*Begun and held at the Session Hall of the Senate,
GSIS Building, Pasay City, on Monday, July 25, 2022*

Session No. 1
Monday, July 25, 2022

CALL TO ORDER

Pursuant to Section 15, Article VI of the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, mandating Congress to convene in regular session on the fourth Monday of July each year, the First Regular Session of the Nineteenth Congress of the Philippines was declared open on July 25, 2022, 10:00 a.m., at the Senate Session Hall, GSIS Building, Financial Center, Pasay City, Metro Manila, with the Acting Senate President, Honorable Juan Miguel F. Zubiri presiding.

PRAYER

Sen. Alan Peter S. Cayetano led the prayer, to wit:

“Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the step with the wicked
or stand in the way that the sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers;

but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day
and night.

That person is like a tree planted
by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
Whatever they do prospers.

Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.

Therefore, the wicked will not stand
in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly
of the righteous.

For the Lord watches over the way
of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads
to destruction.”

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We pray for the leadership that will seek Your Kingdom and righteousness—for the leadership of this country, the Senate and the House; leadership in the local government units; and leadership in every Filipino household.

We thank You, Lord, God for this opportunity to serve You in the Senate. For Your wisdom in picking each and every senator who will serve You and our people. For giving our brother Muslims representation in this august Body after such a long time. For the leadership that will be established today, we pray for Your blessings upon this leadership, for this new administration, and for hope that comes only from You.

May we be like a tree that is planted by the waters and may we shun wickedness.

We acknowledge Isaiah 33:22 which states: “For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King; it is he who will save us.”

Lord, God, we pray for unity as we seek Your kingdom and righteousness. We pray for unity to fight illegal drugs. We pray for unity to get rid of graft and corruption. *Sa pagkakaisa, lahat ay dapat mag-ambag sa problema ng sobrang kahirapan, na malabanan ang mataas na presyo, kakulangan ng trabaho, at mababang kita.*

In seeking Your ways and seeking unity, we ask the Holy Lord God. We ask the Lord Holy Spirit for both wisdom and the spirit that leads to Colossians 3:13—Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you.

Patawarin po natin ang isa't isa at ito po ang magandang umpisa ng ating mahal na Senado.

We ask for all of this in the Lord Jesus Christ's Mighty Name.

Amen.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Ms. Ima Castro led the singing of the national anthem and thereafter the Senate hymn, entitled *Senadong Marangal*.

COMELEC RESOLUTION NBOC NO. 002-22

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, COMELEC Resolution NBOC No. 002-22,

proclaiming the duly-elected senators in the May 9, 2022 elections, copies of which were earlier distributed to the Members of the Senate, was considered read into the *Record of the Senate*.

Following is the full text of the resolution:

NBOC RESOLUTION NO. 002-22

WHEREAS, the Commission on Elections, sitting *en banc* as the National Board of Canvassers for Senators and Party-List Representatives, officially canvassed in open and public session, the votes cast for Senators in connection with the May 9, 2022 National and Local Elections (NLE);

WHEREAS, the Commission promulgated Minute Resolution No. 22-0348 (*In the matter of the dated 05 April 2022 from Consul General Josel F. Ignacio with the Information of the Anticipated Inability of the Philippine Consulate General (PCG) in Shanghai to open its Lone Voting Precinct on the 10 April 2022 Commencement of the Overseas Voting Period due to Covid-19*) on April 6, 2022 approving the temporary suspension of the overseas voting for the PCG in Shanghai pursuant to Section 5 of the Omnibus Election Code;

WHEREAS, the Commission promulgated Minute Resolution No. 22-0652 (*In the Matter of the Request to Allow SBOC at Hong Kong to Generate Certificate of Canvass (COC) without Shanghai PCG Election Returns*) on May 15, 2022 allowing the SBOC of Hong Kong PCG to generate a Canvass Report and directing it to manually encode the election results for Shanghai PCG as zero (0) only for the purpose of enabling electronic transmission of its election results from SBOC Hongkong PCG to NBOC;

WHEREAS, the Commission shall issue a Resolution commencing the conduct of election for the 1,991 registered voters of Shanghai PCG as soon as the conditions brought about by the pandemic therein allows;

WHEREAS, the Commission promulgated Minute Resolution No. 22-0651 (*In the Matter of the Operational Plan for the Conduct of the May 24, 2022 Special Elections in Tubaran, Lanao del Sur*) approving the operational plan for the conduct of the May 24, 2022 Special Elections in the Municipality of Tubaran, Lanao del Sur;

WHEREAS, the Provincial Board of Canvassers of Lanao del Sur could not as yet generate and transmit the Certificates of Canvass of Votes for the Province since the special

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elections in the Municipality of Tubaran is yet to be conducted on May 24, 2022;

WHEREAS, the total number of registered voters in Lanao del Sur is 685,643 while based on the tabulated national Tally Sheet (Report no. 7), the difference between the 12th ranked and the 13th ranked senatorial candidates is 1,844,655 votes;

WHEREAS, on May 17, 2022 the NBOC approved in open session the recommendation of the Supervisory Committee that the National Board of Canvassers can already proceed to proclaim the 12 winning candidates for Senators ranked from 1st to the 12th based on the election results from the 172 out of the 173 COCs canvassed by the NBOC considering that the election results in Shanghai and the Province of Lanao del Sur will no longer affect the ranking of the 12 winning candidates for Senator;

NOW THEREFORE, by virtue of the powers vested under the 1987 Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code (Batas Pambansa Blg. 881), and other election laws, the Commission on Elections sitting *en banc* as the National Board of Canvassers hereby DECLARES the following candidates as the duly-elected Senators of the Republic of the Philippines in the May 9, 2022 National and Local Elections ranked according to the number of votes obtained by each, to serve for a period of six (6) years, beginning at noon of June 30, 2022, in accordance with Section 4, Article VI of the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines:

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| 1. PADILLA, Robinhood C. | 26,612,434 |
| 2. LEGARDA, Lorna Regina B. | 24,264,969 |
| 3. TULFO, Raffy T. | 23,396,954 |
| 4. GATCHALIAN, Sherwin T. | 20,602,655 |
| 5. ESCUDERO, Francis Joseph G. | 20,271,458 |
| 6. VILLAR, Mark A. | 19,475,592 |
| 7. CAYETANO, Alan Peter S. | 19,295,314 |
| 8. ZUBIRI, Juan Miguel F. | 18,734,336 |
| 9. VILLANUEVA, Emmanuel Joel J. | 18,486,034 |
| 10. EJERCITO, Joseph Victor G. | 15,841,858 |
| 11. HONTIVEROS, Ana Theresia N. | 15,420,807 |
| 12. ESTRADA, Jinggoy E. | 15,108,625 |

SO ORDERED.

At this juncture, Acting Senate President Juan Miguel F. Zubiri relinquished the Chair to Sen. Sonny Angara.

COLLECTIVE OATH-TAKING

Thereafter, Senator Angara administered the oath of office to the 12 newly-elected senators.

ROLL CALL

Upon direction of the Acting Senate President, the Acting Secretary, Atty. Edwin B. Bellen, called the roll, to which the following senators responded:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Angara, S. | Legarda, L. |
| Binay, M. L. N. S. | Marcos, I. R. |
| Cayetano, A. P. C. S. | Padilla, R. C. |
| Cayetano, P. S. | Pimentel III, A. K. |
| Dela Rosa, R. B. M. | Poe, G. |
| Ejercito, J. V. G. | Revilla, R. B. |
| Escudero, F. J. G. | Tolentino, F. T. N. |
| Estrada, J. | Tulfo, R. T. |
| Gatchalian, W. | Villanueva, J. |
| Go, C. L. T. | Villar, C. A. |
| Hontiveros, R. | Villar, M. A. |
| Lapid, M. L. M. | Zubiri, J. M. F. |

With 24 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body proceeded to the election of the President of the Senate.

NOMINATION SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

In nominating Sen. Juan Miguel F. Zubiri for the position of Senate President, Senator Villanueva delivered the following speech:

In Romans 8:28, it says, "And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Three years ago, in 2019, in the Eighteenth Congress, I also had the privilege to nominate Sen. Juan Miguel F. Zubiri for the position of Majority Leader. The past three years have shown how he surpassed our expectations and those of the Filipino people which this august legislative Body serves and stands for. With his demonstrated ability as consensus builder, Senator Zubiri set the tone and led this Chamber

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towards accomplishing the agenda of the Filipino people even amid the pandemic leaving behind a productive 18th Congress with 500 bills of national and local applications passed into law. Among the top of the list are the COVID-19 Vaccination Program Act and the *Bayanihan* to Recover As One Act.

But the 18th Congress was not the first time he held a leadership post. At 39 years of age during the Fourteenth Congress, he became the youngest Majority Floor Leader since the First Congress in 1946 and, again, he was Senate Majority Leader in the Seventeenth Congress. He served in both houses of Congress for almost two decades, mentored by the senators who came before us, like Senators Miriam Defensor Santiago, Edgardo Angara, Aquilino Pimentel, and Joker Arroyo.

In the previous Congress, he was part of the leadership team of the Senate consisting of Senate President Vicente C. Sotto III, Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto, and Minority Leader Franklin M. Drilon.

Indeed, there is an appointed time for everything. Two nights ago, if I recall, Senator Zubiri shared with us—this is actually his favorite verse in the Bible, found in the Book of Ecclesiastes—that God’s timing is perfect. Indeed, God’s timing is perfect—it is not too late; it is not too soon. The *Trabador ng Senado* is now ripe for the Senate presidency. *Ika nga po sa amin sa Bulacan: “Ang bungang hinog sa sanga, matamis ang lasa.”*

Senator Zubiri and several other senators present here today— Senator Escudero, Senator Alan Cayetano, Senator Angara, Senator Marcos, Senator Hontiveros, Senator Gatchalian and I—became colleagues in the Lower House during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Congresses. We have seen with our own two eyes how Senator Zubiri transformed from an athletic heartthrob to a statesman. What strikes me the most is the unique quality of his leadership.

He is a dedicated government servant, advocate, and policymaker. The apple does not fall far from the tree as we have seen the same leadership brand from his parents, Gov. Joe Zubiri of Bukidnon and Victoria Fernandez Zubiri of Albay.

The way Senator Zubiri handles the stress and high level demand of the positions he holds never fail to surprise me until now. Tensions, confusions, and disagreements do not easily rattle him. He can manage to keep his cool and face adversities with a smile. *Sabi nga po ng marami sa atin dito sa Senado, kung may boses*

na nakakapagpakalma at ngiting nakakatunaw, kay Senator Migs iyan.

We always wait for him to say, “We have just passed another happy bill,” because it reminds us that we can achieve more if we come together, trust, and cooperate.

His legislative accomplishments are laudable. He is the principal author and sponsor of hundreds of laws of national application both in the Senate and during his stint as a three-term congressman of Bukidnon. To take stack of his legislative track record, I say that Senator Zubiri’s leadership traits best fit for Senate presidency—compassionate, collaborative, and creative.

His compassion stems from being an environmentalist. As a fervent advocate of clean energy, he worked for the passage of R.A. No. 9153 (*Renewable Energy Act of 2008*), and R.A. No. 9367 (*Biofuels Act of 2006*), earning him the monicker “Mr. Clean Energy.”

He is also the founder of the Philippine Deer Foundation, a deer conservation project. His master’s degree in Environment and Natural Resources Management from the University of the Philippines Open University firmly deepened his causes for these issues and evidenced his commitment to life-long learning.

His collaborative skills come from the value he appropriates for cooperatives. We call him the father of the new Cooperative Code because he is the principal author and sponsor of Republic Act No. 9520, or the Philippine Cooperative Code of 2008. His investment in the growth of the cooperative sector carried over to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Congresses where he chaired the Committee on Cooperatives.

His creativity flows from being an entrepreneur and an athlete. He is the chairman and president of the Philippine Eskrima Kali-Arnis Federation, the national sports association for arnis. Under his leadership, PEKAF was responsible for training and supporting the Philippine National Arnis team. PEKAF earned a record 14 gold medals in the 30th Southeast Asian Games.

While our previous Senate President is a multi-awarded bowler, our next Senate President is a gold medalist in the 1989 World Arnis Championships. *Pero huwag po kayong mag-alala dahil kahit ang mga isyu na hindi mada-daan sa debate, may mga isyung ganoon, hindi po ito idadaan ni Senator Migs sa martial arts at arnis.*

This institution must serve the Filipino people, and with Senator Zubiri at its helm.

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steering and charting its course, it can do much more. *Ang institusyong ito ay saksi mula pa noong 1916 na nasa taong-bayan ang totoong kapangyarihan. Isang bagay na malinaw kay Senator Zubiri na nabanaag natin sa kanyang mga naipasang mga batas, mga desisyong ginawa niya dito sa plenaryo ng Senado, at adbokasiyang isinulong sa loob at labas ng lehislatura.*

Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri, my nominee for the Senate presidency, is a veteran legislator having served in both houses of Congress and having posted perfect attendance across two decades of service. He knows by heart, and as a second nature, the Senate Rules and the ins and outs of navigating the legislative procedures, duties, responsibilities and bureaucracy. Consequently, and as evidenced to what I mentioned previously, are his legislative accomplishments, the various committees and posts he held in both houses of Congress, in how he handled, managed, and executed his duties and responsibilities of which we are all witnesses.

In Psalm 78:72, "So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands."

Higit sa lahat, siya ay isang mabuti at mapagmahal na asawa sa kanyang kabiyak na si Audrey at uliran at mapag-arugang ama sa kaniyang mga anak na sina Adrianna, Juan Mi, at ang aking BFF, si Sandy, kaya ganoon na lamang ang kaniyang katapatan at pagmamahal sa ating bayan.

Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri is the most qualified and eligible among us to preside over the Senate of the Nineteenth Congress of the Philippines for the above reasons and more.

I nominate the gentleman from Bukidnon, Sen. Juan Miguel "Migz" Zubiri, as our next Senate President.

NOMINATION SPEECH OF SENATOR LEGARDA

Senator Legarda delivered the following speech seconding the nomination of Senator Zubiri for the position of Senate President:

Sen. Juan Miguel "Migz" Zubiri, who served this august Chamber as Majority Floor Leader during the Eighteenth Congress, has demonstrated his ability to lead and manage the legislative affairs of the Senate.

He collaborated closely with former Senate President Vicente "Tito" Sotto III, former Senate

President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto, and former Minority Leader Franklin Drilon. Together, they guided the Philippine Senate to a fruitful Eighteenth Congress despite the challenges of the more than two-and-a-half years pandemic—dynamic, hardworking, congenial, forward looking—there is never a day I do not see Sen. Migz Zubiri not smiling, *at siya ang tunay na trabahador ng Senado.*

It is my honor and privilege to nominate Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri of Mindanao as Senate President of the Nineteenth Congress.

NOMINATION SPEECH OF SENATOR ESTRADA

In nominating Senator Zubiri for the position of Senate President, Senator Estrada delivered the following speech:

As we open today the Nineteenth Congress, our people expect us Members of this Upper Chamber to keep the role of the Senate as the last bastion of democracy; a revered institution that consistently upholds the national interest, protects civil, political, and human rights, and promotes transparency and accountability in public service.

The last national election was probably the most divisive in recent years. More than two months has since passed, we now have to buckle down and perform our respective mandates as elected officials of this country. And as we navigate a challenging recovery from the pandemic, amid the resurgence of COVID-19 cases, the Senate needs to steer needed pieces of legislation to build back a better economy. To get things done, there is no one in my mind that could lead the present composition of the Senate but Sen. Juan Miguel Fernandez Zubiri or Senator Migz, as we fondly call him.

However, if you were to ask me two decades ago what my impressions are about of Senator Migz, my answer would probably be not the most glowing. After all, we were then at the opposite ends of the political spectrum—I was part of the first family while the neophyte Congressman Zubiri was with the opposition, who was among the most critical of my father's administration.

Ngunit may kasabihan na "Bilog ang mundo." At gaya ng mga bagay sa ating buhay gayundin sa larangan ng pulitika, marami na ang nagbago. Ang ilang bumabatikos sa atin noon ay kaalyado at mabuting kaibigan na



natin ngayon. To borrow the very witty but wise words of my father, "Weather-weather lang iyan."

As I came to know him up close and personal in the four years that we were together in the Senate, I came to admire the man.

When I was honored to be your Senate President Pro Tempore during the Fourteenth Congress, he was a hardworking Majority Leader. As Majority Leader, Senator Migz demonstrated competence and expertise on parliamentary rules and procedures and was able to steer and guide floor deliberations and pending measures with utmost fairness and direction, effectively creating an atmosphere of cooperation and understanding from both the Majority and Minority members. Indeed, I saw firsthand how this gentleman works. *Totoong "Trabahador ng Senado."* He was a true consensus builder, finding ways and means to shepherd the passage of important measures and effectively navigated the so-called "24 Republics," that is, this institution.

His recognition as a consensus leader in the Upper Chamber was the reason why he regained his Majority leadership, first bestowed upon him during the Fourteenth Congress; in the Seventeenth; and in the last Eighteenth Congresses. And as the Majority Leader during the Eighteenth Congress, he dutifully stood on this august floor, sometimes until the wee hours of the night, and even during the dangerous times when COVID-19 emptied it of warm bodies.

On a personal note, *noong ako ay nalugmok, hindi siya sumama sa mga taong sumipa sa akin noong ako ay dapang-dapa.* This shows his decency and respect for a fellow public servant, and I thank him for that. A true gentleman, *totoong tao. Patas na kausap.*

Ngunit hindi tayo naghahanap ng pinuno na mabait, malambing, o may pakikisama lamang. Ang hanap natin ay isang lider na masipag, magaling at higit sa lahat, may alam.

To quote Martin Luther King, "A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus."

In several instances in the past, Senator Zubiri displayed his ability to diffuse the tension on the Senate floor through his "ice cream diplomacy."

His amiable personality, coupled with good looks—*aminin na natin na artistahin, kagaya ng ibang artista rito, katulad nina Sen. Robin Padilla, Sen. Bong Revilla, at Sen. Lito Lapid—*

huwag na po ninyo akong isama sapagkat itong aking mga nabanggit na senador na artista ay mga superstar at higit sa lahat, mas magandang lalaki kaysa sa akin.

Minsan na rin siyang nagpakita ng tapang nang ipagtanggol niya ang integridad ng Senado mula sa akusasyong pag-whitewash ng isinasagawang imbestigasyon sa isang bribery/extortion scandal na kinasasangkutan ng ilang opisyal ng Bureau of Immigration. Ang sabi nga niya sa isang katunggali niyang senador, "I did not become world champion in arnis for nothing." Ngunit sa huli, pinairal pa rin ni Senator Migz ang pagiging maginoo. Pagpapamalas ito ng isang mabuting lider na hindi hahayaang madungisan ang institusyong kinabibilangan natin ngayon.

As we face our future with the pandemic still in the midst, we can depend on a Senate leader who can exercise his best judgment, sound prudence, and wisdom; one who can help chart the destiny of our nation.

Sa kaniyang mahabang taon na karanasan bilang mambabatas sa dalawang Kapulungan ng Kongreso, nagsimula siyang itim ang kaniyang buhok, hanggang sa naging puti na lahat. Masasabi kong buong-buo na ang kaniyang kaalaman at kakayahan upang pangunahan ang pagsasakatuparan ng mabigat na papel ng Senado sa pagbangon ng bayan mula sa dagok ng pandemya.

I am voting for Senator Migz because his consultative approach in bringing together the best ideas that the 24 of us can offer, is the best vaccine against gridlock which has plagued us so many times in the past.

He is the Senate President we should have in these times when we are under immense pressure to deliver to the people what they need. He is the Senate President that we want to ensure that this institution will be a true workhorse—efficient, productive in terms of legislating the urgent policies to revive the economy, and truly responsive to the needs of the Filipinos.

In closing, I would like to borrow a line from the 1957 inaugural speech of former President Carlos P. Garcia: "Together we will meet our common problems and difficulties. With a singleness of purpose together, we will overcome them."

To continue to preserve the independence and integrity of the Senate, I respectfully nominate Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri as our next Senate President.

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NOMINATION SPEECH OF SENATOR POE

Senator Poe delivered the following statement nominating Senator Zubiri to the position of Senate President:

It is my honor to nominate Sen. Juan Miguel “Migz” Zubiri, the most charming gentleman senator of this current wave of statesmen, as the Senate President of the Nineteenth Congress.

Congress deserves hardworking public servants, and it is my honor to be led by the best of us all—a real *Trabador ng Senado* who posts perfect attendance year in and out all his time in Congress.

There is a very thin line between utmost efficiency and slave-driving, and Senator Zubiri threads this line wonderfully. We have seen Senator “Migz” shepherd priority measures on the floor like clockwork and that is exactly the kind of dedication we need to bounce back after a pandemic.

Like the law he principally authored, R.A. No. 11032 or the “Anti-Red Tape Act,” he promotes ease of doing business and efficiency delivery of government services on the Senate floor. He has served twice as the Majority Leader and we all witnessed firsthand his mastery of the Senate Rules, as he pushed landmark legislation on the Senate floor.

And if all else fails, as a master *bolero*, he can turn even the most vehement objections into reluctant agreement and eventually into full consent. He is the founder and chairman emeritus of the committee on charm. *Sa sobrang galing, pati si dating* Minority Leader Franklin M. Drilon, *bumoboto kasama ang* Majority.

Today, he graduates from the front bench to wielding the gavel. I have no doubt, he will use it fairly and wisely, and for the benefit of the Filipino people. It is my privilege to nominate the most foreign-looking senator but a true Filipino statesman to lead us in the Nineteenth Congress.

NOMINATION SPEECH OF SENATOR DELA ROSA

In nominating Senator Zubiri for the position of Senate President, Senator Dela Rosa delivered the following speech:

General Montgomery of the British Army said, “Leadership is the capacity and the will to

rally men and women to a common purpose and the character which inspires confidence.” Leadership which I can attest, is an attribute that Senator Zubiri possesses.

I have witnessed his excellence in leading 23 individuals with 23 different opinions on national issues during the Eighteenth Congress. True to his moniker as *Trabador ng Senado*, I have seen how Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri passionately work for the benefit of our people. He was instrumental in ensuring that this august Body fulfills our sworn constitutional mandate of enacting laws for the common good during the Eighteenth Congress.

Senator Zubiri does not stop working even when he is sick, not even the deadly COVID-19 weakened his dedication for public service. He showed us his unwavering commitment to work during the peak of COVID-19 pandemic. While there was confusion and uncertainties that time, Senator Zubiri together with the members of the Eighteenth Congress, work our ways with blood, sweat, and perhaps, tears so our Executive department will be equipped to effectively combat the detrimental effects of the pandemic. All in a day’s work of an enthusiastic senator such as Senator Zubiri.

There will be debates and disagreements among us colleagues, like every Congress should. Every senator in this Chamber has his or her own view and belief but I certainly know that the leadership of Senator Zubiri will bind us all together. Together in carrying out our duties and responsibilities as *trabadores* of our people.

As a Mindanaoan, it is with great honor and pride to second the nomination of our “*Trabador ng Senado*,” my fellow Mindanaoan, Sen. Migz Zubiri, as Senate President.

NOMINATION SPEECH OF SENATOR EJERCITO

In nominating Senator Zubiri for the position of Senate President, Senator Ejercito delivered the following speech:

As we begin the Nineteenth Congress, we find the country facing difficult challenges. We are still grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic as daily cases continue to rise, prices have skyrocketed because of forces beyond our control, political division still haunt us as evidenced by the horrific shooting at Ateneo University yesterday. Globally, the war in Ukraine, the skirmishes between China and the U.S. in our region, and the territorial disputes among Asian

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countries continue to create uncertainties for our future as a country.

The Senate has historically been the bastion of democracy in our history. Those revered statesmen and stateswomen who have come before us led the country in facing their own challenges. Their patriotism and bravery have made the Senate what it is today. They have won their battles.

This is our battle. This is our time.

And as we go to battle, I am comforted by the fact that the Senate of the Nineteenth Congress is composed of 24 men and women whose love of country cannot be doubted. I am comforted by the fact that we will be led by the man I am so honored and privileged to nominate as Senate President.

Senator Zubiri has been a big part of what the Senate stands for now—a competent and compassionate institution that is always ready to serve the Filipino people in times of peace or crisis.

Senator Zubiri was Majority Leader in three Congresses—the Eighteenth, the Seventeenth, and the Fourteenth Congress which made him the youngest elected Senate Majority Leader since 1946. This demonstrates not just Senator Zubiri's knowledge of the Senate history and its *Rules*, but his strong leadership, his charisma, and his self-assured temperament that is so critical in leading an institution like the Senate.

Senator Zubiri is an honorable man who once gave up his place in the Senate in order to defend this institution and protect his loved ones. He is a dedicated and committed public servant who has recorded complete attendance in his 20 years in public service and passed meaningful laws that benefit our people.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Senator Zubiri because we have been together in two national elections—in 2013 and 2019. Although we are not together as a team in 2019, I know for a fact that he was one of the happiest persons that I made it to the Senate. *Kami po ay maganda ang samahan. We have a very good chemistry kapag magkasama kami. Ako po ang kape at siya iyong Coffeemate; kape at gatas.*

On a personal note also, as the principal sponsor of the Universal Health Care Law and the creation of the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development, when he was the Majority Leader, he was the one pushing me—*lagi niyang sinasabi sa akin, "JV, tara na, i-calendar na natin iyan para maipasa na natin. Kailangan natin maipasa."* Thank

you, Senator Zubiri, for pushing me to pass these two landmark legislations—because of you these laws were taken up on the floor.

Senator Zubiri possesses the kind of leadership that we need—strong but not tyrannical; kind but not naive; cooperative but not subservient; humble but vigilant and gallant.

He is a loyal friend and ally, a pillar of the "Seatmate" block of the Senate, who is always ready and willing to impart his knowledge and support to his colleagues. He is a family man—a loving husband and protective father to his children. I know that there is no better person for the job than Senator Zubiri.

It is therefore a privilege to nominate Sen. Juan Miguel "Migz" Zubiri for the position of Senate President of this honorable Chamber.

CLOSING OF THE PERIOD OF NOMINATION

There being no other nomination, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair declared the period of nomination for the position of Senate President closed.

He then declared the election by acclamation of Senator Juan Miguel Fernandez Zubiri as the new Senate President.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO (A)

Senator Cayetano (A) placed on *Record* that he did not participate in the Senate President's election, would not take part in the selection of the Minority Leader, and would remain independent. Nevertheless, he said that he was reserving his right and privilege to say positive things about Senate President-elect Zubiri.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR CAYETANO (P)

Senator Cayetano (P) congratulated Senator Zubiri on being elected Senate President. She did, however, state that she did not vote for him, nor would she vote for any Minority Leader in order to maintain independence. Nonetheless, she made a commitment to Senator Zubiri to take part in the amazing work that the Senate will be doing to ensure that nothing less than excellent work will come out of the institution.

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MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

Senator Pimentel, for his part, placed on *Record* that he abstained from voting in the election of Senate President but extended his congratulations to Senator Zubiri for being the new Senate President. He also expressed his commitment to help the Senate succeed in the Nineteenth Congress.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Senator Hontiveros also stated that she abstained from voting for the Senate President but was glad that it would be on *Record* that the nomination and election of Senator Zubiri as Senate President was uncontested.

Thereupon, Senator Villanueva invited to the rostrum Senator Legarda, who would administer the oath, and the family of Senator Zubiri for his oath-taking as President of the Senate.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 10:43 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 10:45 a.m., the session was resumed.

OATH-TAKING OF THE SENATE PRESIDENT

Witnessed by the members of his family, Senator Zubiri took his oath of office as President of the Senate before Senator Legarda.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 10:48 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 10:49 a.m., the session was resumed.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

Senate President Zubiri delivered his acceptance speech, as follows:

My dear colleagues, friends, guests, and most especially I would like to welcome the members of the diplomatic core that are here today, headed by His Excellency, the Papal Nuncio, Most Reverend Charles John Brown, and all the other ambassadors; and of course, our former colleagues of the Senate; to my family and friends, *magandang, magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat.*

To my colleagues, thank you for the trust. I shall repay that honor with hard work as your "*Trabahador ng Senado.*"

To my family: my wife, Audrey, who is always been supportive of me 1,000%; to my children, Adriana, Juan Mi, and Santi; to my mother and father, Mommy Vicky and Daddy Joe, I pledge that nothing I do will stain the memory of our ancestors or sour your love for me.

It is with humility that I accept this position. I do so, conscious of the burden it carries, and committed to the work it entails. As presiding officer, I may wield the gavel but not the power of this institution. That power is shared by us all, by every one of you, and more so, our main responsibility of responding to the needs of the people and respecting their will.

I say this because you and I know that never has the fate of the Senate been dependent on the hands of only one man. It has always rested on the collective shoulders of all its members. The Senate has been described as one of the main engines of the chief of State, all of its 24 cylinders firing, unleashing the energy that propels our nation forward.

However, the Senate does not merely row, it also steers the ship, so it will not run into shores or storms. It is the reason why we have to keep watch, always. But every new Senate's course is chartered by the challenges under which it operates. Every new Senate job description is written by the crisis it must confront. And ours is dictated by multiple crisis before us: food, fuel, fiscal, and the fading faith of our people in our institutions, just to name a few.

On top of these is the COVID pandemic which, courtesy of a mutating virus, will continue to disrupt lives and choke the economy before it

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can breathe its very last. But what it cannot suffocate is the fighting spirit of a people whose virtues of hard work, solidarity, compassion are greater than the virus at its vilest.

This Senate will meet these big problems with bold thinking and brave legislation but most especially—and I am looking forward to this—bipartisanship.

In this Senate workshop of great ideas, laws will be forged and from which oversight of those who implement or ignore the laws will also be conducted. And speaking of over-sight, we will exercise it not because we want to encroach on the Executive branch or emasculate it of its powers. We do so in order to help the government—the Presidency even—remedy deficiencies in the delivery of public services and recalibrate ineffective policies.

This Senate under my leadership, however, will be one to solve problems more that it would find faults. While probes are magnets for publicity—and I learned this from the father of Sen. Sonny Angara, Sen. Edgardo Angara—it is the policies, laws patiently written line by line away from the limelight that drives progress.

But for us to do our role, we must uphold the Senate's proud tradition of being independent. And that is important because the Senate's independence is a lynchpin of its two other hallmarks: industry and innovation. Generations of our predecessors whose names are etched on the wall leading to this hall have exercised this to the benefit of our people. The Senate, therefore, is not an office of 24 receiving clerks for executive proposals. We will improve what has been proposed to us as we initiate our own. We do so not because we are rivals for power with the other branch but because we are partners for progress. We do so not to compete for influence but to cooperate for the ways and means on how to bring the nation forward.

This stance practiced by all the Senates which had sat before us, has been the proven formula on how this Chamber has been able to uphold the interest to the Republic and promote the welfare of our people. Our vigilance has purged proposed laws of provisions that harm the people. Our insight, on the other hand, have maximized the gains of our people will reap from laws. When bills are unnecessarily complicated, we inject it with common sense. When bills attempt to overreach, we shield the vulnerable. And, when proposed tax rates are higher than what is reasonable, we make them

fair or we make them go away. When the suggested spending borders on the frivolous, we remind them to be frugal. And, when problems are made unattended, we come up with solutions.

Not even the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the Senate before us from making emergency bills like Bayanihan Act I and Bayanihan Act 2 evolve into superior pieces of legislation, despite having to conduct business remotely, because every man and woman in this Chamber rose to the occasion.

Today, we will troop to the Batasan to hear Pres. Ferdinand “Bongbong” R. Marcos Jr. perform his constitutional duty of telling us the State of the Nation. For sure, he will be asking Congress to support initiatives that will address the people's clamor for jobs, bring down prices of basic goods, affordable food, humane transport, among other relief measures. And when he enumerates them, let us view them in the proper context that this is not a presidential wish list he crafted on his own but a President articulating what the people want. So, let us respond to what the people want urgently and let us do it through the time-honored fashion by which the Senate had acted upon during times of crisis, by harnessing the best ideas that our brightest can offer, so the cures would not just bring temporary relief, but also permanently release our people from what ails them.

Acting on these urgent requests will also allow us to redeem the campaign promises and pledges that we have made. This will be the first downpayment of what we owe the people for the mandate they have gifted us with. So, let us come up with bills that deliver a big payload of solutions to the big problems of the land, what the people truly want that will improve their lives and not just *pogi* points for the Senate—laws that will bring social good not just social media hits; jobs created, hunger reduced, inflation-GNP growth, houses built, higher school test scores, and middle class expanded are the metrics that should gauge our performance, instead of likes, shares, and views.

Legislation must not lag behind the social, economic, and technological curve. It is also must be ahead of what the people want. This requires scrutinizing the budget so that the tax payments will be spent on things that will do greater good to those who pay them.

If there is one mission that should animate the Senate of the Nineteenth Congress, it is

an overriding theme then it must be a Senate for National Reconstruction. But the recovery that we should work for together is not merely returning to where we were ones before. It is catapulting ourselves to a better place than the past.

And, as we buckle down to work, let me issue some invitations:

To the public, let me assure you that this is not only a multi tasking Senate, it is also a crowdsourcing one. We value your ideas because this upper Chamber will never be an echo chamber.

To my fellow Senate workers, to the men and women of the Secretariat, in these trying times when so many expect so much from so few of us, the people expect no less than your hard work and professionalism.

To my dear colleagues in the Majority, I remain with you in the trenches. I see no perks in this position I temporarily hold through your grace except the duty to work even harder.

To my friends in the Minority, I was once a loyal soldier of the opposition, and if there is one lesson I have carried with me ever since, it is that the strength of an idea is what makes it right, and not the sheer number of its believers. Let us debate and embrace ideas without regard from where they came from.

My leadership will be one of consultation. Our output will be through consensus-building. And if former Senate President Tito Sen was a father figure to all of us—then allow me to be your brother that will walk with you during these challenging times.

Yes, no Senate in the past faced challenges as demanding and daunting as this one before us. But with hard work and dedication, we will deliver for the people—we shall help them overcome. The war against the pandemic is not yet over. The battle in many fronts is about to get worse.

There is a future to be won. Let us go to our battle stations and fight to uplift our people's lives and make our nation even greater than before.

Mabuhay ang Senado at mabuhay ang Pilipinas!

At this juncture, Senator Angara relinquished the Chair to Senate President Zubiri.

ELECTION OF THE SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body proceeded to the election of the Senate President Pro Tempore.

NOMINATION SPEECH OF SENATOR ANGARA

In nominating Senator Legarda for the position of Senate President Pro Tempore, Senator Angara delivered the following speech:

It is my distinct honor to nominate as Senate President Pro Tempore of the Nineteenth Congress of the Republic of the Philippines one of the most respected and well-loved lawmakers of our land—Sen. Loren Legarda.

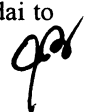
Senator Legarda has earned for herself a long list of achievements as a legislator and policy advocate—all cementing her legacy as a champion of our collective cause for the Filipino nation.

As a senator for 18 years and a congresswoman for three years, Senator Legarda authored numerous laws that shaped the policy landscape in the country for the environment, climate action, disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, cultural heritage preservation, and indigenous peoples' rights, among many others.

She is a pioneer. She was the youngest senator when she began her first term in 1998 in this Chamber. She was the only woman to have topped the senatorial election twice. She was the only woman to have served as Senate Majority Floor Leader at the young age of 41. She was both a TOWNS or Ten Outstanding Women in the Nation, and TOYM or Ten Outstanding Young Men Awardee in her early 30s.

And during her leadership of the Senate Committee on Finance, I had the pleasure of serving as one of her vice chairpersons. She ensured the mainstreaming of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures in the annual budget of government agencies.

Climate and sustainability have been lifelong advocacies for Senator Legarda. And over the years, her vigorous and relentless environmental campaigns and climate policy leadership have been recognized internationally from the United Nations to the IMF-World Bank, from Sendai to



Paris to Bonn, hers has been a well-respected and highly sought out voice at the most senior levels of international climate diplomacy, consensus building, and decision making.

On top of her legislative duties, she has worked as a UNDRR global champion for resilience, a UNFCCC national adaptation plan champion, and a Commissioner of the Global Commission on Adaptation. She was recognized as a Global Leader for Tomorrow by the World Economic Forum and a UNEP Laureate, and was chosen as one of the global parliamentary champions of the Climate Vulnerable Forum.

Alongside these advocacies, Senator Legarda has also vigorously championed our rich Filipino heritage, and has worked to promote cultural resilience, and the rights of our indigenous people. Through her efforts, the Philippines returned to the Venice Biennale in 2015 after a hiatus of more than five decades—opening yet another opportunity for our people to showcase our identity, our heritage, and our history to the rest of the world.

In recognition of her exceptional contributions here and abroad, Senator Legarda has been bestowed the title Knight in the French National Order of the Legion of Honor, Knight in the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, and the Award of Distinction by the European Union (EU). She has brought nothing but pride to the nation. So voluminous are her achievements that many seem to forget that prior to entering public service, Senator Legarda first came into national consciousness as a broadcast journalist.

Some of us remember her as an anchor on *The World Tonight* next to Angelo Castro Jr., and as host of *The Inside Story*, a current affairs program. She earned many accolades for her journalism, including a KBP Golden Dove Award and a Benigno Aquino Award for journalism in 1995, among more than 30 awards.

For many of us in the Senate, Senator Legarda has acted as both an anchor and a vanguard; but for many of those close to her, she is our *Tita Ganda*. She kept us steady amid turbulence, rallied us through tough times and led the country toward a more climate-resilient and sustainable future.

I am confident under your leadership, and with Senator Legarda backing you up as our President Pro Tempore, the Senate is bound to achieve more and to reach new heights—to ultimately serve for the benefit of Filipinos everywhere at all times. It is thus my honor and privilege to nominate Sen. Lorna Regina “Loren” Bautista Legarda as our Senate President Pro Tempore.

SECONDING REMARKS OF SENATOR BINAY

Senator Binay delivered the following remarks seconding the nomination of Senator Legarda for the position of Senate President Pro Tempore:

I have the privilege of nominating Senator Loren Legarda as the Senate President Pro Tempore of the Nineteenth Congress.

As we all know, Senator Loren’s mantra, “To take care of our people,” has always been non-negotiable—to assure them of essential services, and to take it as an article of faith to always see beyond what they need. A seasoned and respected lawmaker for more than two decades, she has relentlessly practiced public service—a truly dedicated public servant.

The Senate is a witness to the long list of legislative measures she has championed, pursued, and advocated for. She has addressed the needs of our marginalized and vulnerable populations, and has caused the meaningful inclusion of women in the public sphere; supported programs upholding our culture and traditions, and advocated for microentrepreneurs who have been the silent heroes of our local economy. It can be said that she is the master weaver of the culture of resilience not only in the country, but also globally.

Sa kanyang ikaapat na termino bilang senador, iminumungkahi ko po ang paghirang kay Senadora Lorna Regina “Loren” Legarda bilang Pangulong Pro Tempore ng Senado ng Pilipinas.

SECONDING REMARKS OF SENATOR POE

Senator Poe likewise delivered the following remarks seconding the nomination of Senator Legarda for the position of Senate President Pro Tempore:

It is my honor and privilege to nominate the most senior member in tenure serving this Congress—not in age, but perhaps in experience and longevity—Senator Loren B. Legarda, as the Senate President Pro Tempore of the Nineteenth Congress.

A legislator since 1998 and having served both in the Senate of the Philippines and the House of Representatives, it is an understatement to say that Senator Legarda is an authority in legislation. Personally, I am witness to Senator Loren’s work as she was one of the standing senators when I was first elected to the Senate



in 2013. She was very kind to me and served as a mentor.

She championed for measures on the environment, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and management, sustainability, and climate justice. Likewise, she has vigorously backed legislation on an array of subject matter in the arts and culture, education, employment, and entrepreneurship. More importantly, this lady senator was instrumental in the passage of several important pieces of legislation such as Republic Act No. 9501 or the "Magna Carta for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises," Republic Act No. 8759 or the "Public Employment Service Office Act," Republic Act No. 9509 or the "Barangay Livelihood and Skills Training Act," and Republic Act No. 9231, a measure that outlawed child labor, among other laws.

In addition to these, she became the Chairperson of the Committee on Finance in the Seventeenth Congress. During her term, she fiercely led the committee and ensured transparency, and proper and judicious allocation of funds.

Senator Legarda is a kind and compassionate public servant, yet she remains to be strong and no-nonsense in accomplishing her tasks. She truly gets things done. To this, I am certain that she will be able to pass more laws that will benefit our *kababayans*.

On a personal note, what truly binds Senator Legarda and I is 2004. She was the embattled running mate of FPJ. Senator Legarda has proven her strength of spirit as she was written as the consistent top lady senator in the polls, it is my honor to be working with her again. Now in her fourth term, I have the privilege to nominate our esteemed colleague from Antique, Senator Loren Legarda for the position of Senate President Pro Tempore.

SECONDING REMARKS OF SENATOR DELA ROSA

Senator Dela Rosa also seconded the nomination of Senator Legarda for the position of Senate President Pro Tempore, and delivered the following remarks:

It is with a profound sense of honor that I stand to make this nomination.

Sen. Loren Legarda is known to be "the Lady who Leads." And I, for obvious reasons, cannot help but agree, since it is not every day that I get to speak about inspiring figures who need no introduction.

I will gladly tell this august Body and the rest of the world about Sen. Loren Legarda. Because she hails from a family of public servants, it should come as no surprise that Senator Legarda decided to take the same path for herself. She is a fourth-term senator, which means that among all of us in this Chamber, she is certainly the most senior—most senior *at hindi lamang dahil sa tagal niya sa Senado, kundi dahil sa dami at kalidad ng mga batas na kaniyang naipasa*.

She has been consistent in promoting livelihood, advocating for the development of cultural villages, and pushing for the protection of indigenous people's rights. The cultural communities in Mindanao have adopted her as a *Bae Matumpis*, which translates to "the one who takes care."

There are countless other things and qualities that one can say about Senator Legarda, but I would like to stop there. With the fact that she has also earned the title of being the one who cares, pairing that up with the lady who leads, we get the picture of the kind of leadership we can look forward to with Sen. Loren Legarda as our Senate President Pro Tempore. She is the lady who leads not just with the vision and determination but, more importantly, with care.

As early as this first day of the First Regular Session of the Nineteenth Congress, I can already say that it is and will always be an honor to submit to the leadership of this lady.

I respectfully nominate Sen. Loren Legarda for the position of Senate President Pro Tempore.

SECONDING REMARKS OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

Senate President Zubiri agreed that Senator Legarda, as the only senator from the Eleventh Congress, would be the Chamber's senior member in terms of experience and wisdom, but not on the basis of age. He also said that he was a big fan of her program *Dayaw* in the late evenings, as the show made it a point of highlighting the country's culture and arts.

CLOSING OF THE PERIOD OF NOMINATION

There being no other nomination, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair declared the period of nomination for the position of Senate President Pro Tempore closed.

ELECTION OF SENATOR LEGARDA AS SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

There being no objection to the nomination, the Chair declared Senator Legarda as the duly elected President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

OATH-TAKING OF SENATOR LEGARDA

Senator Legarda took her oath of office as Senate President Pro Tempore of the Senate before Senate President Zubiri.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH OF SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE LEGARDA

Senate President Pro Tempore Legarda delivered her acceptance speech, as follows:

It is with great honor that I accept the Senate President Pro Tempore position. I am truly humbled by the support given by my distinguished colleagues to lead this august Chamber, which I considered my home for 18 years.

Maraming salamat muli sa mahigit dalawampu't apat na milyong Pilipino na nagtiwala at nagbigay sa akin ng pagkakataong muling maglingkod bilang four-term senator.

When I first entered the Halls of Congress 24 years ago, I was just a novice in the political arena hoping to make a change in our country. My exposure to our society's ills as a young journalist led me to take on the role of the public servant, as a senator of the Republic, and I have then vowed to work tirelessly to find solutions to our country's problems. That was way back 1998. I was 38 years old then.

Today, I stand before you as the most senior senator, having come full circle with 18 years of experience in the Senate and three years of experience in the House of Representatives. Indeed, it has been a fulfilling journey, but our sojourn has not yet come to an end. *Hindi pa po tapos ang ating trabaho.*

Over the last 20 years, we have enacted laws, programs, policies. We have forwarded, supported, and contributed to advocacies that better our country.

From peacekeeping negotiations and humanitarian missions to the pandemic of present day, we have continued to forge on our commitment to assist those who are in need, to the vulnerable, underprivileged, and deprived. *Sa ating pagbangon mula sa pandemya, iisa lamang ang*

ating layunin para sa ating bansa: magkaroon ng pangmatagalang kapayapaan, wakasan ang kahirapan, ituloy ang ating mga programa para sa mahihirap, at makamit ang pambansang pagbangon at pag-unlad.

We have advocated for green development, having authored laws on environmental governance, protection of the environment, and conservation of our natural resources. Having traveled the country and learned about the rich cultural heritage, we continue to support projects and programs that promote and showcase the exceptional skills and the world-class products of our indigenous people, our culture bearers.

Hindi rin mawawala sa ating mga layunin ang mga programa sa kalusugan, edukasyon, trabaho at kabuhayan. Ilan lamang ito sa mga adbokasiya na sinisiguro nating mapopondohan noong tayo ay nanilbihan bilang chair ng Senate Committee on Finance at hanggang ngayon.

We introduced and sponsored vital amendments in a budget allocation for various sectors to ensure that the national budget sponsored socioeconomic services—providing subsidies for free public tertiary education and additional funding for state universities and colleges; free health care services in government hospitals; free irrigation services for small farmers; budget for social welfare programs; and increased funding to support rural livelihoods and micro, small, and medium enterprises.

The pathway toward pandemic recovery is through the economic empowerment of every Filipino. That means supporting our MSMEs—99.51% of the country's businesses and are responsible for an estimated 5,380,815 jobs or 62.66% of the country's employment—bolstering the efficiency of our health sector as part of our vital investments in our human capital by pushing for the full implementation of the Universal Health Care Act.

We have a great deal of work ahead of us. It is not a cakewalk, and we cannot do this unilaterally. For this distinct privilege to work for you and to work with you, I am forever grateful. Thank you for this opportunity to serve as your Senate President Pro Tempore under the leadership of Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri as we steer the Nineteenth Congress towards its objectives.

Sa loob ng 21 taon, malawak na ang naging karanasan natin bilang inyong mambabatas sa Mataas at Mababang Kapulungan. Malayo na rin ang ating narating ngunit



marami pa rin tayong kailangang gawin. Handa akong salubungin ng buong puso ang bagong tungkulin na inyong iniatang sa akin. Umasa kayo na aking gagampanan ito sa tulong ninyo para sa bawat Pilipino.

I stand before you now, excited as I was in 1998, filled with hope. I may be the most senior senator in terms of tenure, not of age and I look at Sen. Imee Marcos now —many of whom call me “tita” with fondness, but this “tita” stands before you with the same determination to serve you and the Filipino people. Now, more than ever, we have to foster unity and good governance for a free, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient Philippines.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Upon motion of Senator Ejercito, there being no objection, the Body proceeded to the election of the chairman of the Committee on Rules.

NOMINATION SPEECH OF SENATOR ANGARA

Senator Angara delivered the following statement, nominating Senator Villanueva to the position of the chairman of the Committee on Rules:

Mga ginagalang na kasama, muli po akong tumatayo para ilahad ang aking nominasyon para sa Majority Leader at chairman ng Committee on Rules sa Ika-Labingsiyam na Kongreso o Nineteenth Congress—ang aking katuwang sa adbokasiya, sa paglikha ng batas, sa paglaro ng basketball; ang aking kumpadre at malapit na kaibigan, no less than Sen. Joel “TESDA Man” Villanueva.

Una pong naging lehislador si Sen. Villanueva bilang partylist representative ng Citizens’ Battle Against Corruption (CIBAC) Partylist. Nagsilbi siya sa Kamara de Representante mula 2002 hanggang 2010, kung saan naging kasamahan niya ang karamihan ng ating mga senador ngayong Nineteenth Congress—sina Senator Alan, Senator Chiz, the Senate President, Senator Risa, myself, and Senator Cynthia Villar as well.

Sa panahong iyon, nagsilbi siyang Minority Leader para sa Commission on Appointments as well as Deputy Minority Leader sa plenaryo.

Nagsulong siya ng mga resolusyon para tutukan at maimbestigahan ang iba’t ibang alegasyon ng katiwalian na nagaganap

diumano sa mga transaksyon ng gobyerno. May akda rin siya ng Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 at ng Freedom of Information Act.

After ably serving three terms in the House of Representatives, Senator Villanueva was appointed by Pres. Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III as Secretary of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). With him at the helm, TESDA managed to eliminate irregularities in its regulatory functions, which led to the closure and suspension of several erring training centers across the country. TESDA achieved zero “Notice of Disallowance” from the Commission on Audit (COA). TESDA earned a nationwide ISO certification, a first among the country’s education agencies, and second in the entire Executive branch.

He introduced innovative programs, such as the free online programs and mobile training laboratories. He fostered closer industry partnerships which led to higher employability of our tech-voc graduates, among many others.

In our opinion, his most important contribution at the time was to raise the profile of TESDA and technical vocation education in the minds of our people. He himself became a certified *barista*, a skill that may prove to be useful in the new role he is about to occupy in the Senate for those late nights with you, Mr. President. We are hoping TESDA can, once again, soar to those same heights under him and help our countrymen during these tough times for our people.

His performance in TESDA was so exemplary it gave him that high national profile to help win a Senate seat in 2016 with the second highest number of votes among all the candidates at 18.4 million votes. And throughout his first term as senator, he was tireless as he chaired the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development as well as Higher Technical and Vocational Education.

He authored and coauthored critical pieces of legislation, such as the *Doktor Para sa Bayan* law, the *Tulong Trabaho* law, the First Time Jobseekers Act, the Ladderized Education or the Philippine Qualifications Framework Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Standards law, the Telecommuting or Work from Home law, and the Free College Tuition or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (UAQTEA), among many others, especially the creation or upgrading of state universities and colleges.

Palagi pong sinasabi ni Sen. Joel Villanueva na ang trabaho niya bilang lehislador ay tiyaking walang panahong mawawalan ng



oportunidad para sa trabaho, kabuhayan, at kita ang bawat Pilipino. Sigurado po kami na ipagpapatuloy niya ito sa kaniyang pangalawang termino rito sa Senado. Naniniwala kami na bukod dito, malaki ang maitutulong niya para siguraduhing tumatakbo nang tama ang proseso ng paglilikha ng batas dito sa ating institusyon at mabibigyan ng sapat na pagkakataon ang bawat senador sa Mayorya, sa Minoriya man, o sa independent block man sila nakahanay. He is a loving husband to Mrs. Gladys Cruz-Villanueva and a father to two young children.

Kaya malugod kong iniharap ang aking nominasyon para sa posisyon ng Majority Leader ng Senado sa darating na Kongreso, ang ating kaibigan at seatmate, kay Sen. Emmanuel Joel "TESDA Man" Villanueva.

NOMINATION SPEECH OF SENATOR DELA ROSA

In nominating Senator Villanueva for the position of the chairman of the Committee on Rules, Senator Dela Rosa delivered the following speech:

It is my distinct honor to rise today to nominate our distinguished colleague, Sen. Joel "TESDA Man" Villanueva, as the chairperson of the Senate Committee on Rules also known as BMW, the "Brother of Migrant Workers."

Senator Joel has proven to us, time and again, that he is indeed worthy to be called a public servant in his own right. The hard work of our dear colleague has been constantly recognized beyond these walls of the Senate. In fact, our "TESDA Man" has recently been recognized as among the 2022 People of the Year by *Stargate PeopleAsia Magazine* for his contributions to job creation for Filipinos and his campaign for skills training to generate world class workers in the country.

As chairperson of the Committee on Rules is a man who shows up. With his untarnished perfect attendance and his consistently notable contributions as a legislator, I can attest that Senator Joel is not only a man who shows up. He is a man who shows up prepared and performs beyond expectation – even during pandemic and his period of mourning, *kung saan siya ay nagluluksa sa sunud-sunod na pagkawala ng kaniyang mga mahal sa buhay.*

Employing Senator Joel's advocacy of "matching jobs and skills," it is indeed a perfect match for Senator Joel to lead the Committee on Rules and be our Majority Leader. He has

already proven to us that he is the "TESDA Man." Now, he is also the man for the job.

I have only one request *sa ating* nominee. Please, Senator Joel, see to it that my good friend, Sen. Francis Tolentino, will no longer complain about the disappearances of his local bills from the Calendar of Business. *Iyan lang ang kaniyang* requirement from the gentleman.

I, therefore, nominate Sen. Joel Villanueva as chairman of the Committee on Rules for the Nineteenth Congress.

SECONDING REMARKS OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

In seconding the nomination of Senator Villanueva for the position of chairman of the Committee on Rules, Senate President Zubiri stated that the senator had proven himself to be a capable leader throughout his public service career by serving in key positions such as Deputy Minority Leader in the Thirteenth Congress and Minority Leader of the Commission on Appointments while he was in the House of Representatives before serving as the Secretary of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

He stated that it was during this period that the senator emerged as an effective and innovative leader, as his work had a significant impact on the country's tech-voc sector, as declared by Senator Recto in a rally in 2016 as a result of the outstanding programs he had placed in TESDA, which eventually led to his election as a senator of the country.

He further stated that Senator Villanueva was not only a dependable, hardworking, and passionate senator in the previous two Congresses, but he had also readily and capably taken over the duties of a majority leader whenever needed. He stated that with the Senator's experience, knowledge, and passion will serve the august Chamber well.

Expressing his full support for Senator Villanueva, Senate President Zubiri then nominated the senator as the next chairman of the Committee on Rules.

CLOSING OF THE PERIOD OF NOMINATION

There being no other nominee for the position, upon motion of Senator Ejercito, there being no objection, the Chair declared the period of nomination for the chairman of the Committee on Rules closed.

J. Zubiri

ELECTION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA AS CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

There being no objection to the nomination, the Chair declared Senator Villanueva as the duly-elected chairman of the Committee on Rules and pursuant to the *Rules*, as the Majority Leader of the Senate.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PADILLA

Senator Padilla registered his vote of abstention on the election of the chairman of the Committee on Rules.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

With the permission of the Body, the session was suspended.

It was 11:36 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 11:37 a.m., the session was resumed.

OATH-TAKING OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Witnessed by the members of his family, Senator Villanueva took his oath of office as chairman of the Committee on Rules before Senate President Zubiri.

DESIGNATION OF MINORITY LEADER

At this juncture, Senator Hontiveros manifested, on the part of the Minority, the designation of Senator Pimentel as the Minority Leader.

She lauded Senator Pimentel as a friend, a veteran legislator, and a former Senate President, and stated her belief that he would make an excellent Minority Leader, as his late father, Sen. Aquilino "Ka Nene" Pimentel Jr. She further pointed out that, for the first time, a father and son pair would both have served as Senate Presidents and Minority Leaders during their terms.

She also expressed confidence that Senator Pimentel would help maintain the Senate's independence as an institution.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

At this point, Senate President Zubiri expressed his delight at Senator Pimentel's uncontested nomination and designation as Minority Leader. He recalled being the Majority Leader at the time Sen. Aquilino "Ka Nene" Pimentel Jr. was the Minority Leader and said that he was honored to be able to work with the son as well.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

Senator Pimentel accepted the position of Minority Leader and thanked Senator Hontiveros for the nomination.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

In thanking the Lord and the Members for his election as Majority Leader, Senator Villanueva delivered the following speech:

I give all the glory, honor, and grace to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. *Nakakataba po ng puso, Ginoong Pangulo; nakaka-humble, nakaka-inspire ang mga sandaling ito.*

Hayaan ninyo na sa ilang segundo ay pasalamatan ko ang aking mga colleagues, bumoto man sa akin o hindi, maraming salamat; especially to our Senate President, Sen. Migz Zubiri, for the trust and confidence; to Senator Angara and Senator Dela Rosa for the nomination, I really appreciate it.

In Luke 12:48, it says: "To whom much is given, much is required."

I know that more than a rank, title, or position, I am now receiving a great responsibility. This responsibility is about taking care of this beloved institution, the people of Senate.

My predecessor, Senator Zubiri, has so raised the bar for this office and keeping up will be a constant challenge, but we are ready to learn and listen. We will burn the midnight oil to live up to the responsibilities. We will not sleep or rest until we finish our job. *Kung kailangan magtrabaho ng trabahong kalabaw o mag-paka-kuba po tayo, nakahanda tayo kasama ang lahat ng ating staff sa opisina.*

I have been a point guard in basketball all my life and I know that success in any human endeavor requires effort and team work.

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Communication is not only essential but critical in a team. We will ensure that nothing stands in the way of good communication and coordination between our offices.

While I consider myself a rookie in this new role, we are not a *tabula rasa* or a blank slate. We have been with the Committee on Rules for a very long time. When I was the Benjamin of the House in the Twelfth Congress, I was elected assistant Majority Leader along with our Senior Majority Leader, Sen. Chiz Escudero, and then deputy Majority Leader, Sen. Alan Cayetano.

When Sen. Chiz Escudero became our Minority Leader, I was one of his Deputy Minority Leaders, and I must say that I lavishly benefited from the guidance of Sen. Chiz Escudero and Sen. Alan Cayetano, especially on how to make the Rules serve the best interest of our people.

I know that we stand on the shoulders of giants in our attempt to make a difference. And let me say that the past six years were worth more than a doctorate degree because of the mentoring we received from the living legends and the gurus of this institution. To name a few: former Senate President Vicente Sotto III, Sen. Ralph Recto, Sen. Franklin Drilon, and Sen. Panfilo Lacson, among others.

I also would like to take this opportunity to thank my family: my brother; my sister; my dad, Brother Eddie; and most especially my mom and sister, whom I know are watching me right now, demanding that I always do my best. To honor their memories, I pledge every bit of energy in my body, mind, and spirit to give justice to this responsibility you entrusted to me, dear colleagues.

To my wife, Gladys, who is here today with us. This role is going to take effort and I have to admit extra effort, *labs*. *Ngayon pa lamang ay nagpapasalamat na po ako sa kanya dahil sa hirap at ginhawa lagi ko siyang kasama*, and I love her, and I always will.

In closing, let me say that God blessed my life with opportunities. He makes my cup overflow. To praise, honor, and glorify Him forever is the only desire of this Representation. *Ialay po natin ang bawat segundo, bawat minuto, at bawat oras ng trabaho natin dito sa Senado upang maparangalan, mapurihan, at madakila ang dakilang pangalan ng ating Panginoong Diyos.*

Kaya mga kasama, tara, trabaho na tayo.

Maraming salamat at pagpalain tayong lahat ng ating Panginoong Diyos.

ELECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body proceeded to declare the election of the Secretary of the Senate.

NOMINATION REMARKS OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva nominated Atty. Renato N. Bantug Jr. for the position of Senate Secretary.

He stated that Attorney Bantug has been working in the Senate of the Philippines for 27 years and had been its Executive Director for Legislation since 2004. He stated that Attorney Bantug served as acting Senate Legal Counsel in 2010 and as Chief of Staff of the Office of the Senate President from 2013 to 2016.

SECONDING REMARKS OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Senator Hontiveros seconded the nomination of Attorney Bantug, and commended him for his 24 years of service in the Senate which included working with the Senate Minority Leader in the Eighteenth Congress. She stated that he would be a worthy lieutenant to the Senate President in upholding the independence of the institution.

CLOSING OF THE PERIOD OF NOMINATION

There being no other nominee for the position, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the period of nomination for the position of Secretary of the Senate was closed.

ELECTION OF ATTY. RENATO N. BANTUG JR. AS SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

Thereupon, the Chair declared Atty. Renato N. Bantug Jr. as the duly elected Secretary of the Senate.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Zubiri, the session was suspended.

It was 11:49 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 11:49 a.m., the session was resumed.

OATH-TAKING OF THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

Attorney Bantug took his oath of office as Secretary of the Senate before Senate President Zubiri.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 1

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 1, entitled

RESOLUTION INFORMING HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES, THAT THE SENATE HAS BEEN ORGANIZED WITH THE ELECTION OF ITS OFFICERS AND THAT THIS BODY HAS ENTERED UPON THE EXERCISE OF ITS FUNCTIONS FOR THE FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES.

Secretary Bantug read the text of the resolution, to wit:

Resolved by the Senate, that His Excellency, the President of the Philippines, be informed that the Senate has been organized with the election of its officers and that this Body has entered upon the exercise of its functions for the First Regular Session of the Nineteenth Congress of the Philippines.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 1

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 1 was adopted by the Body.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 2

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 2, entitled

RESOLUTION INFORMING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THAT THE SENATE HAS BEEN ORGANIZED WITH THE ELECTION OF ITS

OFFICERS AND THAT THIS BODY HAS ENTERED UPON THE EXERCISE OF ITS FUNCTIONS FOR THE FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES.

Secretary Bantug read the text of the resolution, to wit:

Resolved by the Senate, that the House of Representatives be informed that the Senate has been organized with the election of its officers and that this Body has entered upon the exercise of its functions for the First Regular Session of the Nineteenth Congress of the Philippines.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 2

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 2 was adopted by the Body.

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered House Concurrent Resolution No. 1, entitled

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO HOLD A JOINT SESSION TO HEAR THE MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES.

Secretary Bantug read the text of the resolution, to wit:

Resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring, that both Houses of Congress of the Republic of the Philippines hold a Joint Session on Monday, July Twenty-five, Year Two Thousand and Twenty-two, at four o'clock in the afternoon at the Session Hall of the House of Representatives, to hear the message of the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

ADOPTION OF HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, House Concurrent Resolution No. 1 was adopted by the Body.

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SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 1, entitled

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION CREATING A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO NOTIFY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES THAT CONGRESS, NOW CONVENED FOR ITS FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES, IS READY TO HEAR HIS STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS IN A JOINT SESSION OF BOTH HOUSES.

Secretary Bantug read the text of the resolution, to wit:

Resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring. That a committee of five (5) Members of the Senate, appointed by the Senate President, join a committee of the House of Representatives to notify the President of the Philippines that Congress, now convened for its First Regular Session of the Nineteenth Congress of the Philippines, is ready to hear his State of the Nation Address in a Joint Session of both Houses.

ZUBIRI AMENDMENT

On the text of the resolution, as proposed by Senate President Zubiri, there being no objection, the Body approved to replace the word and figure "five (5)" with SIX (6).

ADOPTION OF SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1

Thereafter, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 1 was adopted by the Body.

JOINT COMMITTEE TO NOTIFY THE PRESIDENT

Pursuant to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 1, Senate President Zubiri appointed Senators Villanueva, Legarda, Marcos, Estrada, Tolentino, and himself as members of the Joint Notification Committee, on the part of the Senate.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva asked the Members to remain in the Session Hall for a photo session, reminding them that they had until one o'clock that afternoon to have their solo portraits taken at the Padilla Room.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair declared the session suspended until four o'clock in the afternoon for the Joint Session of Congress at the Session Hall of the House of Representatives, after which, the session of the Senate shall be considered adjourned until three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day.

It was 11:58 a.m.

Joint Session held at the Session Hall of the House of Representatives, Quezon City

At 3:56 p.m., the Secretary of the House of Representatives announced the arrival of the President of the Philippines.

OPENING OF THE JOINT SESSION

The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives declared the joint session open at 3:59 p.m.

NATIONAL ANTHEM AND PRAYER

The national anthem was sung by the Samiweng Singers of Ilocos Norte followed by ecumenical prayers led by different religious groups.

THE STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS

The President of the Philippines, Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., delivered his State of the Nation Address, to wit:

Vice President Sara Zimmerman Duterte; Former Presidents Joseph Ejercito Estrada, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo; and Rodrigo Roa Duterte; Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri and the honorable Members of the Senate; House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez and the honorable Members of the House of Representatives; Chief Justice Alexander Gesmundo and

the honorable Justices of the Supreme Court; the Apostolic Nuncio Most Reverend Charles John Brown and the esteemed members of the diplomatic corps; the honorable members of the Cabinet; our First Lady Louise Araneta Marcos and our children; distinguished guests; *ang mga minamahal kong mga kababayan*; ladies and gentlemen; *magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat*.

I come before you today to address you, as it is my duty as President of the Republic.

We live in difficult times brought about by some forces of our own making, but certainly, also by forces that are beyond our control.

But we have, and we will continue to find solutions.

And these are some of them:

In terms of the economy, we will implement a sound fiscal management.

Tax administration reforms will be in place to increase revenue collection.

Expenditure priorities will be realigned, and spending efficiency will be improved to immediately address the economic scarring arising from the effects of COVID-19, and also to prepare for future shocks.

Productivity-enhancing investments will be promoted.

Our country must become an investment destination, capitalizing on the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises or the CREATE Law and the economic liberalization laws such as the Public Service Act and the Foreign Investments Act.

Ecozones will be fully supported to bring in strategic industries such as those engaged in high-tech manufacturing, health and medical care, and all emerging technologies.

This is also seen to facilitate economic growth outside of Metro Manila.

Our tax system will be adjusted in order to catch up with the rapid developments of the digital economy, including the imposition of value-added tax on digital service providers.

The initial revenue impact will be around P11.7 billion in 2023 alone.

Tax compliance procedures will be simplified to promote ease of paying taxes.

We will pursue measures to determine possible undervaluation and/or trade misinvoicing of imported goods.

Through information and communications technology, the Bureau of Customs will promote streamlined processes.

Disbursements for 2022 to 2023 will be maintained at above 20 percent of gross domestic product or P4.955 trillion and P5.086 trillion, respectively, to ensure continuous implementation of priority programs.

Disbursement will further increase over the medium-term from P5.402 trillion or 20.7 percent of our GDP in 2024 to P7.712 trillion or 20.6 percent of GDP in 2028.

The Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy of this administration seeks to attain short-term macro-fiscal stability while remaining supportive of the country's economic recovery and to promote medium-term fiscal sustainability. Furthermore, and more importantly, fiscal policy aims to bring together the National Government's resources so that these are mobilized and utilized in order to gain the maximum benefit and the high multiplier effects for our economy.

Measurable medium-term macroeconomic and fiscal objectives include the following headline numbers. These are based on forecasts that are consistent with the guiding principles of coherence of strategies, policy discipline, and fiscal sustainability.

- 6.5% to 7.5% real gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2022; 6.5% to 8% real GDP growth annually between 2023 to 2028;
- 9% or single-digit poverty rate by 2028;
- 3% National Government deficit (GDP) ratio by 2028;
- Less than 60% National Government debt-to-GDP ratio by 2025; and
- At least 4,256 USD income (GNI) per capita and the attainment of upper middle-income status by 2024.

The aforementioned headline goals summarize the objectives of this Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy (MTFF) being submitted to Congress, for its adoption and concurrence through a Concurrent Resolution by the Senate and House of Representatives.

Once adopted, the MTFF will become an anchor for the annual spending and financing plan of the National Government and Congress when preparing the annual budget and undertaking related appropriation activities. It is therefore a forward-looking document that extends beyond the traditional three-year horizon to reach six years, coinciding with the six-year

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coverage of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023 to 2028.

The MTFP also promotes transparency and credible commitment to pursue the indicated socio-macroeconomic goals that optimize the government budget.

Medium-term growth targets and the assumptions regarding key macroeconomic variables underpin the medium-term fiscal plan. The recent past and the COVID-19 pandemic has beset the macroeconomic environment with challenges and a series of external shocks. Inflation has accelerated in recent months due largely to significant increases in international prices of oil and other key commodities.

Still, the economic growth momentum remains firm as demonstrated by the strong 2022 first quarter GDP growth at 8.3 percent. However, the recovery process from the impact of the pandemic is still ongoing amid elevated uncertainty in the international economic environment. Revisions in the macro-economic assumptions incorporate these challenges and most recent economic developments, leading to upward adjustments in the following:

- Inflation rate for 2022 to 2023;
- Foreign exchange rate for 2023 to 2025; and
- Goods and services imports growth for 2022.

The economy is expected to grow by 6.5 percent to 7.5 percent this year as we continue to reopen the economy while considering the recent external developments.

In the first quarter alone, GDP saw an increase in household consumption and private investments, along with a robust manufacturing industry, high vaccination rate, improved health-care capacity, and an upward trend in tourism and employment. This is expected to continue for the rest of the year. This strong economic growth is projected to be sustained and expanded further to 6.5 percent to 8 percent from 2023 until 2028.

The average inflation for 2022 is projected to range from 4.5 percent to 5.5 percent, following the uptick in fuel and food prices as a result of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and the disrupted supply chains.

It is slightly adjusted to 2.5 percent to 4.5 percent in 2023, and is seen to return to the target range of 2.0 percent to 4.0 percent by 2024 until 2028.

Dubai crude oil price is expected to settle at 90 USD to 110 USD per barrel in 2022, 80 USD to 100 USD per barrel in 2023, and 70 USD to 90

USD per barrel from 2024 onwards as oil supply is expected to catch up and stabilize over the medium-term.

The Philippine peso is projected to average between P51 to P53 per US dollar in 2022 and P51 to P55 per US dollar from 2023 onwards due to aggressive monetary policy tightening by the U.S. Federal Reserve, market aversion amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and again, increased global oil prices.

Lastly, exports of goods are expected to grow by 7 percent in 2022, and 6 percent from 2023 to 2028.

On the other hand, imports of goods are projected to grow by 18% in 2022, 6 percent in 2023, and 8 percent from 2024 to 2028.

I have instructed the NEDA to coordinate with other agencies and work on the Philippine Development Plan for 2023 to 2028 and to submit to me the complete blueprint and progress of its implementation not later than year-end.

One of the main drivers of our push for growth and employment will be in the agricultural sector.

With regard to food supply, we are confronted by a two-pronged problem: that which will hit us in the short term and that which will hit us in the long term.

Tayo ay nahaharap sa mga problemang kagyat nating mararamdaman, at mga hamong pang-matagalan.

Ang mga suliraning agarang mararamdaman ng ating mga kababayan ay ang posibilidad ng tuluy-tuloy na pagsipa ng presyo ng pagkain at kakulangan sa suplay ng ating pagkain.

Upang masuportahan ang mga mamimili para mapanatili ang kanilang purchasing power o kapangyarihan sa pagbili, isinapinal ng Department of Agriculture ang planong taasan ang produksyon sa susunod na panahon ng pagtatanim o planting season, sa pamaagitan ng tulong pinansiyal at teknikal.

Magbibigay tayo ng pautang, habang mas ilalapit natin sa sektor ng agrikultura ang hindi gaanong mahal na farm inputs na bibilhin na ng bulto ng gobyerno.

Kabilang dito ang abono, pestisidyo, mga punla, feeds, fuel subsidy at ayuda para sa mga karapat-dapat na benipisyaryo.

Para sa pang-matagalang solusyon: itataas natin ang produksyon ng mga kalakal

at produktong pang-agrikultura. At para magawa ito, pagtitibayin natin ang tinatawag na value chain na nagsisimula sa mga magsasaka hanggang sa mga namimili.

May mga bahagi ng value chain na sa ngayon ay kanya-kanya ang operasyon. Pagtibayin natin ang koordinasyon ng iba't ibang bahagi nito.

Ang pagsasaliksik para sa mga maka-bagong paraan ng pagtatanim at pag-aalaga ng hayop ay masusing gagabayan ng Department of Agriculture.

Ang produksyon ng farm inputs o mga kakailanganin ng mga magsasaka sa pagpapalago ng kanilang sakahan ay ating i-aayon sa mga hamong dala ng climate change at global warming.

Mahigpit na pagsusuri ang gagawin ng ating mga eksperto tungo dito.

Ang mga pautang at financial assistance sa mga magbubukid at mangingisda ay magiging institusyon at patakaran ng aking administrasyon.

Ipaprayoridad natin ang modernisasyon ng mga sakahan sa pamamagitan ng mga maka-bagong teknolohiya para sa ating mga magsasaka. Ating palalawakin ang mga palaisdaan, babuyan at manukan. Lahat ng ito, gagamitan ng siyensya para tumaas ang produksyong agrikultural.

Maging ang post-production at processing ay susuportahan ng pamahalaan.

Gagawa tayo ng national network ng farm-to-market roads upang mas mabilis na mailakbay ng mga magsasaka ang kanilang mga produkto sa mga pamilihan.

At gagawa tayo ng mga paraan upang maramdaman ng mga mamimili ang pagluluwag ng presyo ng mga produktong pagkain sa kayang halaga, gaya ng muling pagbubuhay ng mga Kadiwa Centers.

Hindi ito magagawa sa isang araw, hindi magagawa sa isang buwan, o isang taon lamang.

Ngunit kailangan na natin simulan NGAYON.

Ang agrarian reform program ay dapat magpatuloy.

Agrarian reform is not only about acquisition, but also about support services and distribution.

To assist this, I intend to issue an executive order to impose a one-year moratorium on the

payment of land amortization and interest payments. This is included in Republic Act No. 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.

A moratorium will give the farmers the ability to channel their resources in developing their farms, maximizing their capacity to produce, and propel the growth of our economy.

The civil society organizations also support this because it will unburden the farmers of their dues and be able to focus on improving farm productivity.

Congress must also pass a law that will emancipate the agrarian reform beneficiaries from the agrarian reform debt burden, thereby amending Section 26 of Republic Act No. 6657. **IN THIS LAW, THE LOANS OF AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES WITH UNPAID AMORTIZATION AND INTEREST SHALL BE CONDONED.** *Layunin ng batas na ito ay burahin ang hindi mabayarang utang ng ating mga magsasaka na benipisyaryo ng agrarian reform.*

Agrarian reform beneficiaries who are still to receive their awarded land under the comprehensive agrarian reform program shall receive it without any obligation to pay any amortization.

The condonation of the existing agrarian reform loan will cover the amount of P58.125 billion benefiting 654,000 agrarian reform beneficiaries and involving a total of 1.18 million hectares of awarded lands.

Executive Order No. 75, Series of 2019 requires that all government agencies, bureaus, departments, and instrumentalities to turn over agricultural lands to qualified agrarian reform beneficiaries.

At present, we have a total of 52,000 hectares of unused agricultural lands of the government which shall now be used for distribution to the following sectors in accordance with Section 40 of the Republic Act No. 6657, as amended, thus:

- Landless war veterans;
- Landless surviving spouse and orphans of war veterans; and
- Landless retirees of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.

Agricultural lands acquired under this program will be given to graduates of college degrees in agriculture who are landless.

The call of the times is for the infusion of fresh and new blood in the agricultural sector. We need a new breed of farmers equipped with modern agricultural technology able to engage in sustained scientific farming that will not only increase farm yields, but also resilience in the face of climate change.

They say that each brand has a story. As for the Filipino brand, ours is deeply rooted in our rich cultural heritage and the tourism sector plays an invaluable role in the promotion of the Filipino brand.

Tourism is not only an important economic development tool but the abundance of opportunities that the sector creates in terms of regular employment and even job creation at the grassroots level is undeniable.

To boost our tourism industry, we will first and foremost make basic developments such as road improvements for easier access to tourism spots. We will also upgrade our airports and create more international airports to help decongest the bottleneck in the Manila Airport.

We will also make it more convenient for travelers to go around the country, even to remote areas to help promote undiscovered tourist spots. This program will be led by the Department of Tourism, together with the Department of Public Works and Highways.

To foster the Filipino brand is to spark our sense of pride and reaffirm our strong sense of identity. It is time to welcome the rest of the world with an enhanced Filipino brand that is unique, attractive, and creative.

The creativity of the Filipino is truly world-class. We excel in arts and culture, new media, live events — avenues which generate primary and downstream jobs for our creative and talented countrymen. Unfortunately, *ang mga hanapbuhay na ito ang unang pinadapa ng pandemya at ang pinakahuli namang makakabalik sa normal.*

The creative industry likewise faces many challenges including workplace conditions, working hours, intellectual property rights, and the welfare of our beloved freelancers who were left vulnerable during the height of the pandemic.

We require an institutionalized creative industry that will advance the interests of its stakeholders — *sila na nagbibigay ng kaluluwa at [pagkakilanlan] sa ating pagka-Pilipino. Protektahan natin sila.*

The Department of Social Welfare and Development has a large part to play in all of this.

Magpapatuloy ang ating pagkalinga sa ating mga kababayan na lubos na nangangailangan.

Hindi po natin sila pababayaan.

Mangunguna sa pag-aagapay sa kanila ang Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Utos ko sa DSWD ang mabilis na pagtugon sa pangangailangan ng mga biktima ng kalamidad at mga iba't ibang krisis.

Ang mga field office nila ay inatasan na maagang maglagak ng family food packs at non-food essentials sa mga LGU, bago pa man manalasa ang anumang kalamidad.

Magdadagdag tayo ng mga operations center, warehouse, at imbakan ng relief goods, lalo na sa mga malalayong lugar na mahirap marating.

Titiyakin natin na maayos ang koordinasyon ng DSWD at Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development nang sa ganun, madali ang pagpapatupad ng Emergency Shelter Assistance program para sa mga biktima ng kahit anong kalamidad.

Pagtitibayin pa natin ang komprehensibong programang "Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations" o ang ating tinatawag na AICS, para maiparating ang tulong sa mas maraming biktima.

Hindi natin papahirapan ang mga biktima ng krisis na dudulog sa ahensiya — gagawin nating simple ang proseso ng paghingi at pagpaparating ng tulong. Dahil hindi naman dapat dinadagdagan pa ang hirap na naranasan ng ating mga mamamayan.

Upang matiyak na mapupunta sa kwalipikadong mga pamilya ang tulong ng pamahalaan sa pamamagitan ng 4Ps o Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, titiyakin natin na malilinis ang listahan ng benipisyaryo. Higit na sa isang milyong pangalan na ang naka-graduate na sa listahan. At nagagalak akong mabatid na sila ay nakakatayo na sa kanilang sariling paa.

Kaugnay nito ay inutusan ko ang DSWD na pag-ibayuhin pa ang pag-repaso ng listahan upang maitutok ang pamimigay ng sapat na ayuda sa mga lubos na nangangailangang pamilya.

Magpapatuloy ang supplemental feeding program para sa mga bata sa Child Development Centers at Supervised Neighborhood Play, at lalo pa nating palalawakin sa taong 2023.

Hindi rin natin nakakalimutan ang mga solo parents at mga nanay na nahiwalay sa kanilang mga mister dahil sa karahasan. Pagtitibayin natin ang programa sa Violence Against Women and Their Children, kabilang na ang counselling para sa mga biktima, katuwang ang ating mga LGU.

Tiyakin natin na sapat ang pondo sa halos pitumpong residential care centers at pitong non-residential care centers para sa vulnerable sectors at persons with disabilities na sumisilong dito.

Sa ating sitwasyon ng pangkalusugan, nariyan pa rin ang banta ng COVID-19, lalo't may mga nadidiskubren bagong variants ng coronavirus. Pero hindi na natin kakayanin ang isa pang lockdown. Wala na tayong gagawing lockdown.

Dapat nating balansehin nang maayos ang kalusugan at kapakanan ng ating mga mamamayan sa isang banda, at ang ekonomiya naman sa kabilang banda.

Nakikipagtulungan ang iba't ibang ahensya ng pamahalaan sa pag-monitor sa mga COVID-19 hospital admission upang makatiyak tayo na may sapat na kapasidad ang ating health care system, at maiwasan ang pagsipa ng bilang ng nagkakasakit.

Patuloy din ang ating vaccine booster rollout para sa ating pangkalahatang depensa. Sa ganitong paraan, kahit pa tumaas muli ang bilang ng mga COVID cases, mananatiling mababa ang bilang ng mga maospital at bilang ng mga namamatay.

Sa pamamagitan nito, unti-unti rin tayong masasanay na nariyan ang virus pero hindi na seryoso ang banta sa ating buhay.

I-aayon natin ang ating mga health protocols sa kung ano ang ating pangangailangan sa paglipas ng panahon at lalo pang iibayuhin ang kooperasyon kasama ang pribadong sektor upang tumaas pa ang kumpanyang mga mamumuhunan, nang sa gayon ay bumalik na tayo sa "full capacity" lalung-lalo na ang ating mga negosyo.

Pagbutihin pa natin ang pagpapakalat ng tamang impormasyon ukol sa COVID, kasama ang kahalagahan ng bakuna.

Mananatili muna sa ngayon ang ating Alert Level System natin. Pinapag-aralan natin ang ibang paraan ng klasipikasyon upang mas babagay sa kasalukuyang sitwasyon lalung-lalo na sa pagbabago ng COVID.

Sa pakikipagtulungan ng Kongreso, itatag natin ang ating sariling Center for Disease Control and Prevention at ang isang vaccine institute. Magtatayo tayo ng dagdag na mga health center at ospital.

Beyond the issues that the pandemic has brought, the need for a stronger health care system is self-evident. We must bring medical services to the people and not wait for them to come to our hospitals and health care centers.

Napakinabangan natin nang husto ang malalaking specialty hospitals gaya ng Heart Center, Lung Center, Children's Hospital at National Kidney and Transplant Institute. Kaya maliwanag na hindi lang dapat dito sa National Capital Region, kundi maging sa ibang parte ng bansa kailangan magdagdag ng ganitong uri ng mga pagamutan.

Bukod dito, upang mailapit natin ang health care system sa taumbayan nang hindi sila kailangang pumunta sa sentro ng kanilang bayan, lalawigan o region, ay maglalagay tayo ng mga clinic, mga RHU na pupuntahan ng mga doktor, nurse, midwife, med tech, isang beses, dalawang beses sa isang linggo — nang sa gayon, magiging mas madali sa may karamdaman na magpapagamot nang hindi na kailangang magbiyahe nang malayo.

One of the cornerstones of a strong healthcare system is the provision of competent and efficient medical professionals. We will exert all efforts to improve the welfare of our doctors, our nurses, and other medical frontliners.

Dapat din tayong magkaroon ng sapat na suplay ng gamot na kinakailangan sa pang-araw-araw ng ating mga mamamayan.

Sinimulan ko na ang pakikipag-usap sa mga kumpanya ng gamot dito sa Pilipinas at sa ibang bansa. Hinihikayat natin na buksan nila ang merkado upang bumaba ang presyo ng gamot.

Halimbawa, kung mas marami ang mas murang generic o hindi branded na gamot sa merkado, mas bababa rin ang presyo dahil sa kumpetisyon.

Ang Department of Trade and Industry ay nakikipag-usap sa mga interesadong manufacturer ng generic drugs na papasok sa ating bansa.

Inuutusan ko naman ang Philippine Competition Commission na pantay-pantay dapat at walang kartel sa hanay ng mga pharmaceutical companies. Dahil kapag bukas ang merkado, bababa ang presyo ng gamot para mapakinabangan ng ating mga mamamayan.

This is one of the hard lessons that we learned when the pandemic struck, and therefore, we must act on that shortcoming.

In the educational sector, I believe it is time for our children to return to full face-to-face classes once again.

The Department of Education, led by our highly able Vice President Sara Duterte, is now preparing for its implementation in the upcoming school year, with utmost consideration for the safety of students, as we are still in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We must ensure that our classrooms are safe for teachers, for students, and the entire academic community when they return to face-to-face classes.

We continue to encourage everyone to get their booster shots in preparation for the resumption of in-person classes.

This is one of the reasons I have directed the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to undertake another rollout of booster shots.

The condition and availability of school rooms for our students must also be addressed, again, in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Though some complications have arisen over the question of repair of school buildings in relation to the Mandanas-Garcia ruling, this will be ironed out.

We have been in discussion with local government leaders, governors and mayors, in the last few weeks to determine, with the LGUs, what is actually practicable, what functions belong to the LGUs, and what belong to the National Government.

There have also been lengthy discussions on the continuation and viability of the K to 12 school system. We are giving this a careful review, and all necessary inputs and points of view are now being considered.

In the longer term, we are instituting a program of refresher courses and re-trainings for our teachers so they can stay abreast of the

rapid growth in technology, especially in this post-pandemic world.

As for the “horror” stories that we have heard about the poor quality of educational materials and supplies that are being given to our schools – this must end! Our children must always be equipped with the best that we can provide.

Ang edukasyon ay ang tangi nating pamana sa ating mga anak na hindi mawawaldas. Kaya anumang gastusin sa kanilang pag-aaral ay hindi tayo nagtitipid. Hindi rin tayo nagtatapon.

And once again, I am not talking about history, or what is being taught. I am talking about materials that are necessary for effective teaching in this day and age.

Children now need connectivity to the internet; they need devices to use; they need computers, educational tools so that they might participate fully in the digital community here and abroad.

We must do better in the international rankings especially when it comes to the so-called STEM subjects: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

These skills and this knowledge are necessary for our young people to be able to compete in a highly technological and competitive world.

The raw talent is there in our young people. It is up to our educational system to develop and to refine that great pool of talent.

Foreign employers have always favored Filipino employees because of our command of the English language. This is an advantage that we must continue to enjoy.

The internet has now become the global marketplace. Not only for goods services but also for ideas, even extending to our own personal interactions.

The language of the internet – for better or for worse – is English.

Therefore, the question of our medium of instruction must be continuously re-examined to maintain that advantage that we have established as an English-speaking people.

On a related subject, we are entering an age of exponential adoption of technology. It is the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

This will be characterized by the infusion of technology into almost every facet of our daily lives. Breakthrough technologies in the areas of

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quantum computing, artificial intelligence, nano technologies, the internet of things, robotics, self-driving electric vehicles, 3D printing, Virtual and Augmented Reality, among others that will radically transform the way business is done.

The scale and the speed at which these innovations are introduced universally into our everyday lives and activities is unprecedented in our recorded history.

We cannot stand idly by.

The mission of our Department of Information and Communications Technology is to identify and utilize these innovations to improve governance.

It has the daunting task now of transforming our government into an agile bureaucracy that is responsive to the needs of the public, provide good and solid data to ensure informed decision-making, as well as allow secure and seamless access to public services.

The voluminous records stored in the government warehouses and archives have to be digitized. Those that are already stored in various inventories of data should be harmonized and shared across departments and agencies.

Needless to say, these have to be kept in large data centers that are secure yet accessible.

The National ID will play an important part in this digital transformation.

For citizens to be able to seamlessly transact with government, their identity must be easily verifiable.

We expect to issue 30 million physical IDs and 20 million digital IDs by the end of this year. The target is to accomplish the issuance of about 92 million IDs by the middle of next year.

As the world moves into rapid digitalization, the digital divide will become more pronounced. The depth and breadth at which these technologies will be transformative in our lives is fully expected.

This will open new opportunities for the creation of wealth but will also likely create inequalities.

Hence, universal connectivity will be a vital component in order to ensure that no citizen is left behind.

I have therefore tasked the DICT to deploy digital connectivity across our various islands. This will be done through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, the common tower program, connecting our Geographically Isolated

and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) via our "Broad Band ng Masa" project.

All relevant modes of digital transport should be utilized. These may be through a combination of terrestrial or submarine fiber optics, wireless, and even satellite technology.

As our Public Service Act has opened the doors and removed the restrictions on foreign investment, we foresee an increase in direct investment of overseas players.

This will translate into better quality, availability, and affordability of telecommunications services all over the country.

We come now to infrastructure. The backbone of an economy is its infrastructure.

The infrastructure program of the Duterte administration must not only continue but, wherever possible, be expanded. We shall confidently build on this firm foundation established by my predecessor. As it is in building an edifice. We must keep the momentum. And aspire to BUILD BETTER MORE.

Necessarily, infrastructure development will remain a very high priority in our drive for growth and employment. Once again, I will not suspend any of the ongoing projects as those have already been shown to be of benefit to the public that they serve. We will continue to study the proposals that have been made. Infrastructure development spending will be sustained at 5 percent to 6 percent of GDP.

The planned expansion of infrastructure projects, I believe, would be possible if we continue to encourage the participation of the private sector in the development of our programs.

Public-Private Partnerships or PPPs hold great potential for that expansion, for infrastructure development and for innovation.

Our infrastructure development is of primary importance as it is a necessary element to improve many other sectors—to include agriculture, tourism, general economic activity, and even to governance.

It is my belief also that we have missed some great opportunities to develop our rail transport system.

It is clear in my mind that railways offer great potential as it continues to be the cheapest way of transporting goods and passengers.

We can build upon already existing lines by modernizing these old railway systems.

There are dozens of railway projects – on the ground, above the ground, below ground, not just in Manila, but in other regions – at various stages of implementation, and with a combined cost of P1.9 trillion.

This Administration is committed to finish building the current portfolio of investments: approved railway projects such as the North-South Commuter Railway System, the 33-kilometer Metro Manila Subway Project, the 147-kilometer North-South Commuter Railway System, the 12-kilometer LRT-1 Cavite Extension, the 23-kilometer MRT-7, and the Common Station that will connect LRT-1, MRT-3 and MRT-7.

And beyond NCR, larger scale railway systems like the 102-kilometer Mindanao Railway Project; the Panay Railway Project; and the Cebu railway system will be integrated as a vital part of our transport and communications systems.

We will also continue to improve our roads and transportation systems in key cities throughout the country through various projects such as the Cebu Bus Rapid Transit, Davao High Priority Bus System, Ilocos Norte Transportation Hub, and the El Nido Transport Terminal.

My order to the Department of Transportation (DOTr) is really very simple: FULL SPEED AHEAD!

Improving our railway system, along with modernizing existing airports and seaports, will maximize our strategic location in the Pacific. And connect our many islands.

A key sector in our transformation plans is that of energy.

Another fundamental requirement for growth and increased employment will be the availability of cheap, reliable energy. This even comes under the category of “ease of doing business.” If we are to attract investors, both local and foreign, to set up shop here in the Philippines.

At present, our demand for energy far exceeds our reliable supply. We must increase the level of energy production. We must look at every possible option that would be appropriate for the Philippine situation. There is some room to expand our present power supply through existing power sources, but this is only to a very limited extent. We must build new power plants. We must take advantage of all the best technology that is now available, especially in the areas of renewable energy.

Our search for new power sources should always be with an eye to improving the mix of the energy supply between traditional and renewable sources.

The technology on renewable energy is progressing rapidly. And many of these technologies are appropriate for the Philippines. We have already begun windmill power. We are now expanding very quickly our solar power production.

For both offshore and onshore wind turbines, for example, the World Bank has calculated that there is the potential of 255 gigawatts by the year of 2030.

Solar power has steadily increased its efficiency in converting sunlight to electrical power, which is particularly attractive for the Philippines. Because unlike wind power, solar power is practical almost everywhere in the Philippines all year round.

In the move to lowering our carbon footprint caused by energy production, our advancement to renewables will have a lead time.

In the interim, natural gas will hold the key. We will provide investment incentives by clarifying the uncertain policy in upstream gas, particularly in the area close to Malampaya.

This requires clarification of the processes and review of service contracts policy.

I believe that it is time also to re-examine our strategy towards building nuclear power plants in the Philippines.

We will comply of course with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regulations for nuclear power plants as they have been strengthened after Fukushima. In the area of nuclear power, there have been new technologies developed that allow smaller scale modular nuclear plants and other derivations thereof.

Once again, PPPs will play a part in support as funding in this period is limited.

Furthermore, we must examine the entire system of transmission and distribution for the purpose of finding ways to lower the price of energy to the consumer and to industry.

We must expand the network of our transmission lines while examining schemes to improve the operation of our electrical cooperatives. All this in aid of reducing energy cost especially but not limited to households.

All this impetus for development and growth, we undertake within the context of

accelerating climate change and extreme weather conditions.

Though we are a minor contributor to climate change globally, we have the unfortunate distinction of being one of the most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change.

For the welfare of our people, it is incumbent upon us to alleviate the effects of that vulnerability.

The use of renewable energy is at the top of our climate agenda. We will increase our use of renewable energy sources such as hydropower, geothermal power, solar, and wind.

Geographically, we are a disaster-prone country. Capacity building for our natural disaster resiliency is therefore a must. Investment in science and technology is imperative to enable us to have accurate weather forecasts and on-time disaster alerts.

Studies show that already now many areas in the Philippines are at high risk from the rise in sea levels brought about by the increase in global temperature. We must adapt to this phenomenon with disaster-proof planning of our communities.

We will also look into the precarious fresh water supply situation in the country, especially in our urban areas. Many of our water supply systems date back to the 1950's, and they must now be rehabilitated and improved.

I have instructed the DENR, together with the DPWH, to explore possible partnerships with the private sector to address this crucial situation.

The Philippines has excellent laws on the environment, but we have to guarantee that these laws are properly enforced. And this will require a great deal of coordination and cooperation between concerned government agencies and private stakeholders.

Companies who exploit our natural resources must follow the law. We all have the responsibility to preserve this Earth, for we are but custodians, and we will pass on this great treasure to future generations.

There is no question that the preservation of the environment is the preservation of life.

If we cannot mitigate climate change, all our plans for the economy, all our plans for our future, will be for naught.

Bawat Pilipino sa ibayong dagat na nagsakripisyong lisanin ang kanyang pamilya sa

Pilipinas upang mag-hanapbuhay ay nararapat lamang magkaroon ng pamahalaang matatawag nilang "tahanan" habang nasa ibang bayan.

Ito ang papel na gagampanan ng Kagawaran ng Manggagawang Mandarayuhan o Department of Migrant Workers matapos itong ideklara bilang ganap na ahensya ng gobyerno noong isang taon.

Ang kagawarang ito ang magsisilbing kanlungan ng ating mga kababayan sa gitna ng mundong walang kasiguruhan at mahigpit na kumpetisyon. Ito ang maglalalatag sa kanila ng mga oportunidad; titiyak na ang kanilang mga hanapbuhay ay tugma sa kanilang mga kasanayan; maninigurong akma ang sahod at maayos ang kalagayan sa kanilang mga kumpanya; at mangangalaga sa kanilang mga pamilya habang sila ay nasa malayo.

Gagawin natin ito sa pamamagitan ng pag-aalis ng red tape sa sistema ng pagsusulong ng digital empowerment. We shall automate the verification of contracts and issue secure Overseas Employment Certifications (OEC) that you can keep on your smartphone. I call on the Department of Migrant Workers and the DICT to make this a top priority.

Tinatawagan ko rin ang Department of Foreign Affairs na makipagtulungan sa Department of Migrant Workers na tiyakin ang lahat ng mga diplomatic post ay tutulong na agarang maibalik sa trabaho ang mga ating mga Overseas Filipino workers na nawalan ng hanapbuhay nitong nakalipas na ilang taon.

Mula sa tatlong buwan ay gagawin na lang nating tatlong linggo para sa isang dayuhang employer na i-proseso ang mga papeles ng Pilipinong nais nitong kunin bilang empleyado.

Aatasan din natin ang kagawaran na gawing simple ang kumplikadong handbook ng mga tuntunin at regulasyon para sa mga OFW, nang sa gayon ay maging maalwan ang mga transaksyong may kinalaman sa kanilang pangangibang-bansa.

Mula sa handbook na may dalawang daan at apatnapung (240) seksyon ay gagawin nating pamphlet na lamang na hindi hihigit sa isandaang pahina.

Mahirap na nga ang buhay, kaya naman ayaw pa natin makitang lalo pang nahihirapan ang ating mga manggagawang mandarayuhan sa pagtupad sa kanilang mga pangarap.

Para sa mga kababayan nating naiipit sa kaguluhan, inaabuso, at nanganganib ang buhay, ikinagagalak kong sa ilalim ng aking pamumuno, ay ilulunsad natin ang One Repatriation Command Center o ORCC. Ilalaan natin ang isang social media platform ng Department of Migrant Workers at ang hotline upang matulungan agad at mailigtas sila mula sa mas higit na kapahamakan.

Noon, nangungutang pa ang isang ina ng bawat OFW upang sumakay ng barko para pumunta sa Maynila at mangatok sa iba't ibang ahensya para mapauwi ang anak na inaapi. Ngayon, kami na ang tatawag sa mga magulang ng OFWs para sabihin sa kanila ang petsa kung kailan nila mayayakap at makakapiling ang kanilang mga anak.

Sa kasalukuyan ay nakikipag-ugnayan tayo sa pamahalaan ng Saudi Arabia upang buksang muli ang deployment. Kaya natin, at gagawin natin, ang makipag-negosasyon na mabigyan ang ating mga kababayan doon ng tamang pasahod, at mapangalagaan ang kanilang karapatan at kapakanan.

Muli nating pagtitibayin ang respeto at pagkakaibigan ng ating dalawang bansa tulad ng namagitan sa aking ama at sa kanilang hari.

Sa mga susunod na buwan ay magtutungo si Secretary Susan Ople sa Saudi Arabia upang tiyakin na may sapat na puwersang magsisiguro na mabubuksang muli ang empleyo sa bansa, at para maisulong ang ating kampanya laban sa human trafficking.

Ngayon, para naman sa mga anak na naiwan sa Pilipinas. Tiyakin ng Department of Migrant Workers, sa pamamagitan ng OWWA, na sila ay maipapasok sa magagandang paaralang magtuturo sa kanila ng financial literacy, mental wellness, sports, sining at kultura. Ito ay mangyayari sa pakikipagtulungan ng iba't ibang ahensya ng pamahalaan. Alagaan natin ang kabataang Pilipino sapagkat sila ang kinabukasan ng ating Inang Bayan.

Sa ating mga kababayan na nasa ibang bansa: You deserve a Home in Government not only for the money that you send home, but you are not cold tools of the economy. You deserve it for your sacrifices, for our country, and your perseverance and excellence in the global arena.

You OFWs represent the fighting faith of the Filipinos as a nation and as a people. Let us transform your overseas journey into inspirational stories for all time.

Thanks to you, our dear legislators, and of course, to the man, every OFW now refers to as

their “Tatay,” President Rodrigo Duterte. You passed the law that created this new home for our OFWs.

On the area of foreign policy, I will not preside over any process that will abandon even one square inch of territory of the Republic of the Philippines to any foreign power.

With respect to our place in the community of nations, the Philippines shall continue to be a friend to all, an enemy to none.

The Philippines has always been open and welcoming to all our foreign friends and visitors. That is our world view, and that is our culture.

BUT LET ME BE CLEAR. WE ARE VERY JEALOUS OF ALL THAT IS FILIPINO.

We will be a good neighbor – always looking for ways to collaborate and cooperate with the end goal of mutually beneficial outcomes.

If we agree, we will cooperate and we will work together. And if we differ, let us talk some more until we develop a consensus.

After all, that is THE FILIPINO WAY.

But we will not waver. We will stand firm in our independent foreign policy, with the national interest as our primordial guide.

We commit to maintaining good relations with the rest of the world.

As a matter of fact, it is my sincere belief that the need for strong bonds and collaboration among nations emerges in the direst of times, such as in a pandemic.

The partnerships and alliances that we make with all will provide the stability that all nations will need as we emerge into this new global economy.

The Philippines will continue to promote stronger and multi-faceted relationships with all our partners around the world.

We are, in fact, grateful for the messages of support and offers of help that we have received from many of our friends in the international community. This has been communicated to us through the different envoys and the ambassadors here in the Philippines.

Such strong relationships can only be beneficial to all involved.

As I am here today addressing the legislature, allow me now to propose legislation that we would like you to pass in support of these programs:

1. National Government Rightsizing Program (NGRP)

A reform mechanism that seeks to enhance the government's institutional capacity to perform its mandate and provide better services, while ensuring optimal and efficient use of resources.

Compared to previous government reorganization efforts, the NGRP will entail a comprehensive strategic review of the functions, operations, organization, systems and processes of the different agencies, and massive and transformational initiatives in agencies concerned, such as mergers, consolidation, splitting, transfer, and even the abolition of some offices. The rightsizing efforts will also involve the conduct of a comprehensive strategic review of functions, programs and projects that will cut across various agencies.

2. Budget Modernization Bill

This seeks to institutionalize the Cash-based Budgeting System (CBS) under Executive Order No. 91, Series 2019 to strengthen fiscal discipline in the allocation and use of budget resources by ensuring that every peso budgeted by the government would lead to the actual delivery of programs and projects. The full implementation of the CBS is timely and vital as the government executes response and recovery plans post-pandemic.

3. Tax Package 3: Valuation Reform Bill

This bill provides for the:

- (a) establishment of real property values and valuation standards across the country and
- (b) the development of Real Property Information System that provides for the database of all real property transactions and declarations in the country

4. Passive Income and Financial Intermediary Taxation Act (PIFITA)

This seeks to reform the taxation of capital income and financial services by redesigning the financial sector taxation into simpler, fairer, more efficient and a revenue neutral tax system. It also represents to adopt a regionally competitive tax system.

5. E-Government Act

Which provides for the establishment of the E-Government Master Plan which

shall cover all e-government services and processes.

6. Internet Transaction Act or E-Commerce Law

Which aims to establish an effective regulation of commercial activities through the internet or electronic means to ensure that consumer rights and data privacy are protected, innovation is encouraged, fair advertising practices and competition are promoted, online transactions are secured, intellectual property rights are protected, and product standards and safety are observed.

7. Government Financial Institutions Unified Initiatives to Distressed Enterprises for Economic Recovery (GUIDE)

This seeks to provide financial assistance to distressed enterprises critical to economic recovery through programs and initiatives to be implemented by the Land Bank of the Philippines, the Development Bank of the Philippines and the Philippine Guarantee Corporation for purposes of addressing liquidity or solvency problems of MSMEs and strategically important industries, to encourage their continued operations and maintain employment.

8. The Establishment of a Medical Reserve Corps

Establishes a Medical Reserve Corp (MRC) under the Health and Emergency Management Bureau (HEMB) of the DOH. The MRC shall be composed of licensed physicians, medical students who have completed their four (4) years of medical course, graduates of medicine, registered nurses, and licensed allied health professionals.

9. National Disease Prevention Management Authority

This bill seeks to create the Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), attached to the DOH.

10. Creation of the Virology Institute of the Philippines

This will create the Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines (VIP) as an attached agency of the DOST. All offices and units under the DOST with functions related to virology shall now be transferred to the Virology Institute of the Philippines.

11. Department of Water Resources

This seeks to create the Department of Water Resources and adopts the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) as the strategic framework for national water management, policymaking and planning.

12. Unified System of Separation, Retirement and Pension

This grants a monthly disability pension, in lieu of disability benefits provided under existing laws, for military and uniformed personnel (MUPs) retired by reasons of disability.

13. E-Governance Act

It promotes use of internet, intranet and other ICT to provide opportunities for citizens.

14. National Land Use Act

This will provide for a rational and holistic management and development of our country's land and water resources; hold owners accountable for making these lands productive and sustainable; strengthen the LGU to manage ecological balance within its jurisdiction. It also provides for Land Use and Physical Planning/Framework as a mechanism in determining policies and principles to implement this legislative measure.

15. National Defense Act

This seeks to amend the antiquated National Defense Act of 1935 to provide for a change in the military structure of the Armed Forces of the Philippines that is more responsive to current and future non-conventional security threats to the country's territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

16. Mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and National Service Training Program (NSTP)

This seeks to reinstitute the ROTC program as a mandatory component of senior high school programs (Grades 11 and 12) in all public and private tertiary-level educational institutions. The aim is to motivate, train, organize and mobilize the students for national defense preparedness, including disaster preparedness and capacity building for risk-related situations.

17. Enactment of an Enabling Law for the Natural Gas Industry

This seeks to foster the development of

the Midstream Natural Gas Industry in a bid to strengthen Philippine energy security by diversifying the country's primary sources of energy and promoting the role of natural gas as a complementary fuel to variable renewable energy.

18. Amendments to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act or EPIRA (Rep. Act No. 9136)

This aims to improve the implementation of the law's provisions and enhance its effectiveness to address high cost of electricity, alleged market collusion, and insufficient power supply.

The bill seeks to restructure the Energy Regulation Commission (ERC) to foster accountability and improve the commission's government system that would ensure consumer protection and in enhancing the competitive operation of the electricity market.

19. Amendments to the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Law

This seeks to improve the implementation of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Program and to be able to direct the desired outputs and outcomes in line with the strategic development targets of the country. Specifically, the amendments seek to:

1. Address the ambiguities in the existing law;
2. Address the bottlenecks and challenges affecting the implementation of the PPP Program; and
3. Foster a more competitive and enabling environment for PPPs.

To my fellow Filipinos, *ang aking mga minamahal na kababayan. Batid ko na hindi madali ang ating pinagdaraan sa naka-raang higit na dalawang taon. Alam ko rin na ang bawat isa sa inyo ay ginagawa ang lahat ng inyong makakaya upang patuloy na harapin ang lahat ng pagsubok sa kasalukuyan.*

I do not intend to diminish the risks and the challenges that we face in this turbulent time in global history, and yet, I see sunlight filtering through these dark clouds.

We have assembled the BEST Filipino minds to help navigate us through this time of global crisis that we are now facing.

We will endure. Let our Filipino spirit ever remain undimmed.

I know this in my mind, I know it in my heart,
I know it in my very soul ... THE STATE OF
THE NATION IS SOUND.

Thank you and good afternoon. *Marami
pong salamat sa inyong lahat.*

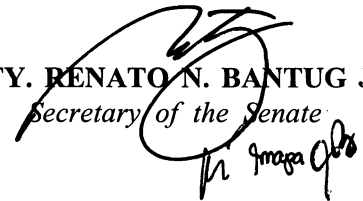
ADJOURNMENT OF JOINT SESSION

Thereafter, the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives declared
the joint session adjourned.

It was 5:20 p.m.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the
foregoing.

ATTY. RENATO N. BANTUG JR.
Secretary of the Senate



Approved on July 26, 2022