

**Acceptance Remarks of Senator Loren Legarda  
Award Ceremony  
Winner in Southeast Asia in Closing the Gender Gap  
Women in Parliaments – Global Forum  
27 November 2013, Brussels, Belgium**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of President Benigno Aquino and the Filipino people, I accept this award with sincere thanks and appreciation for this important recognition.

The award could not have come at a more opportune time for my country as we strive to rise from the massive loss of lives and destruction inflicted by the strongest tropical typhoon ever recorded. This is indeed a most uplifting development which I wish to dedicate to the courageous women of our country.

Our country's guidepost in the promotion of women's rights is our Constitution. The state recognizes the role of women in nation building and the "fundamental equality before the law of women and men."

Our Constitution affirms such role, long performed by our women, dating back to the time before our independence. I recall that our national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, even wrote a letter to the brave women of Malolos for taking a stand in defense of their right to education. He wrote, and I quote, "No longer does the Filipina stand with her head bowed nor does she spend her time on her knees, because she is quickened by hope in the future."

Indeed, the Filipina shows no cowardice in the face of challenges.

Our women play an important role in my country. They are involved in all sectors of our society. In fact, they are present in more than a hundred countries around the world, caring for children and parents not their own, and operating businesses and industries as part of the force that drives the growth of the global community. We are sharing 10 million Filipinos with the rest of the world, and 60% of them are women.

This reality compels us to continuously search for measures that will protect our women at home and beyond.

The Philippines remains deeply committed to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform of Action, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Magna Carta of Women (MCW), our gender equality law patterned after CEDAW, guarantees social, economic, civil and political rights of women.

Over the years, our women have assumed vital roles in our country. Today, they have become peace builders.

In October 2012, the Philippine Government signed the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, which established a road map for ending four decades of war in southern Philippines. Women's leadership at the peace table has been unprecedented. Our national peace office and the head of the government's peace-negotiating panel are proudly, women.

The influence they have on the framework agreement is clear as it bears a provision that ensures women's position and influence in shaping the future of Bangsamoro.

A number of laws have been adopted by the Philippines with the Filipino woman at the top of mind. These include the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act which provides for a gender-responsive and proactive response in lessening the impacts of disasters and climate change; the Domestic Workers Act which effectively brings domestic workers, the vast majority of whom are women, within the full and formal protection of our laws and government; the Expanded Anti-trafficking in Persons Act which ensures greater protection for women and children.

We are also seeing a "historical first" in the Philippine justice system with the advent of the "triumvirate" of the first woman Chief Justice appointed last year, and the appointments by the President of women to head our Department of Justice and the Office of the Ombudsman.

We have had 2 female Presidents, one of whom was the late Mrs. Corazon C. Aquino, the mother of the incumbent President of the Philippines, who shattered the so-called glass ceiling of leadership for women and paved the way for future leaders not only in my country but also in the whole of Asia.

Filipino women have also become more visible in politics. There are presently six women senators out of 24 and 75 of 287 members of the Philippine House of Representatives.

The number of local women executives has also been increasing, with 22 per cent of our provinces headed by women governors. At the municipal level, 1 in every 5 mayors is a woman.

Indeed, women have ruled and continue to rule the Philippines, but challenges will never go away.

In closing, allow me to thank our international partners and volunteers that are helping us go through one of the greatest challenges we are facing as a nation in recent history. On behalf of President Benigno Aquino and a grateful nation, thank you for your overwhelming support in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan.

With your unflinching help, we will ride on the significant achievements we have attained and use these to help our nation rise up and continue with the journey of improving the lives and securing the rights of women around the world.

Thank you.