



DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
KAGAWARAN NG UGNAYANG PANLABAS

**MESSAGE ON THE 122ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE
PROCLAMATION OF PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE**

The men and women of the Department of Foreign Affairs join me in celebrating with Filipinos around the world the 122nd Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence.

The Philippines is once again at a turning point in history. This year's theme — "*Kalayaan 2020: Tungo sa Bansang Malaya, Nagba-bayanihan, at Ligtas*" — calls on the nation to stay united, to keep cooperating as it has done so well in the longest, strictest and therefore smartest lockdown in the world in response to the pandemic.

And to maintain the mutual trust essential in the battle against an invisible enemy deadlier than any enemy that can be seen. This is real stealth warfare; with all the advantage of surprise and deadliness on the other side.

The circumstances faced by our forebears 122 years ago were different. Although we lost that battle, we ultimately won its objective by cooperating with the victors to achieve our independence.

Now we face an enemy we cannot see until we are stricken by it. An enemy we cannot live with or in any way accommodate without destroying ourselves and our country. This is a battle to the end: of the pandemic or of our nation. We need an even tighter unity and a more vibrant *Bayanihan* spirit; we need more courage, fortitude and perseverance than our forebears had if we are to win the war against this pandemic. Because we have no choice: we win or we die.

With President Rodrigo Roa Duterte at the head of a national war effort, your Government is trying everything possible — given our limited resources in manpower and medical technology and resources, despite which we have done much better than many rich countries — to ensure an inclusive and effective national response to this pandemic; a response that leaves no one behind or unprotected; that sacrifices no Filipino nor spares any however privileged from some of the strictest protocols adopted anywhere against Covid-19.

The road to healing and recovery will not be easy; even now we hesitate to relax our vigilance or reduce the demands of nothing less than a war effort.

But we take cues from our heroes who persevered in losing battles and even after total defeat— until they had given the last full measure of self-sacrifice for our country to be independent and for our people to be and stay completely free. The struggle continues. Today it is a struggle to be free of a deadly disease. The Department of Foreign Affairs is one with our people in remembering the past and continuing the fight.

As we face together a new kind of tomorrow, we shall be guided by, and show the same tenacity and commitment as our heroes, until we can all step out into the light of the day of victory when finally the danger is well past. And we can resume our lives with redoubled energy to recoup what we have lost and resume the progress we were making for which we were so famous in Asia. But always and ever to live free of tyranny and independent of foreign domination — a sincere friend to sincere friends, an implacable enemy to unrelenting enemies; and a worse enemy to false friends. Live free or die. Happy Independence Day. Mabuhay!


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