

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

National Conference on Wetlands, Climate Change Adaptation and Biodiversity Conservation

Silliman University, Dumaguete City

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GOOD MORNING....

MY MESSAGE IS A SIMPLE ONE. AS INDIVIDUALS, WE HAVE A FUNDAMENTAL OBLIGATION TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY OF THE PLACES IN WHICH WE LIVE. THIS OBLIGATION IS NOT THE EXCLUSIVE DOMAIN OF GOVERNMENT, WHETHER IT BE AT THE LOCAL, PROVINCIAL, REGIONAL OR NATIONAL LEVELS. ON THE CONTRARY, THE EVERYDAY DECISIONS THAT ARE MADE OUTSIDE OF GOVERNMENT WHETHER THEY BE BUSINESS DECISIONS OR PERSONAL DECISIONS HAVE A PROFOUND EFFECT ON THE HEALTH OF OUR ENVIRONMENT, THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR ECONOMY, AND THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES.

OUR STEWARDSHIP OBLIGATION SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN LIGHTLY; IT IS ONE OF AWESOME PROPORTION. WHEN WE TALK ABOUT WETLANDS AND BIODIVERSITY, WE ARE TALKING ABOUT RESOURCES THAT TOUCHES OUR LIVES DAILY. THEY ARE, INDEED,

WORLD CLASS RESOURCES WITH WORLD CLASS DIMENSIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE. AND, COLLECTIVELY, THE DECISIONS WE MAKE AND THE OPINIONS WE EXPRESS AS INDIVIDUAL STAKEHOLDERS HELP SHAPE MANAGEMENT AND OTHER PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS AT THE REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND EVEN INTERNATIONAL LEVELS.

OUR ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES RESULTED TO RAPID ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES. CHANGES THAT COULD BE DIVIDED INTO TWO MAJOR CATEGORIES: ONE IS THE DETERIORATION OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, FROM LAND DEGRADATION TO TOXIC POLLUTION AND OZONE DEPLETION, GLOBAL WARMING AND CLIMATE CHANGE DUE TO GREENHOUSE GASES EMISSION AND SO ON. THE SECOND CATEGORY IS THE LOSS OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OR BIODIVERSITY. IN OUR QUEST FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WE CHOPPED DOWN FORESTS, POLLUTED OUR SEAS AND WATERWAYS, POISONED OUR ATMOSPHERE AND DEGRADED OUR LANDS. WHAT WE HAVE LEFT IS A LEGACY THAT WE ARE STILL GETTING TO GRIPS WITH.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING ON WETLANDS, CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION THEREFORE REQUIRES US IN

GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE OUR CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION WITH ALL SECTORS OF THE SOCIETY WITH THE END VIEW OF MINIMIZING NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS. BUT OF COURSE, WE IN GOVERNMENT ALSO NEED TO CREATE AN ENABLING POLICY ENVIRONMENT THAT WILL ENHANCE OUR INSTITUTIONAL & REGULATORY CAPACITIES.

WE SHOULD ALL BELIEVE IN SUSTAINABILITY; THE NOTION THAT ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC GOALS CAN AND SHOULD BE PURSUED IN CONCERT. AND, WE MUST CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN PARTNERSHIPS; THAT SHAPING OUR FUTURE IS NOT A GOVERNMENT-DRIVEN, TOP-DOWN APPROACH, BUT A CONSENSUS-BASED, BOTTOM-UP PROPOSITION.

WE NEED TO STRENGTHEN OUR DECISION SUPPORT CAPABILITY SO THAT WE CAN TURN A LEGACY OF PAST ABUSE INTO A SHOWCASE OF AN EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION.

I HOPE THAT THIS FORUM WILL SUMMARIZE THE PAST AND SET THE SCENE FOR THE FUTURE. NOW THE TASK OF DELIVERY LIES AHEAD. CONFERENCES SUCH AS THIS WILL ENSURE THAT WE CONTINUE TO BUILD ON THE MOMENTUM ALREADY GENERATED.

MARAMING SALAMAT AT MABUHAY