

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**SPEECH BY
PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
AT THE IISANG NASYON, IISANG AKSYON: TAPUSIN ANG ONLINE SEXUAL ABUSE OR EXPLOITATION OF
CHILDREN (OSAEC) NGAYON SUMMIT 2024**

[Delivered at the New World Hotel in Makati City | 16 September 2024]

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Secretary of Interior and Local Government, Secretary Benhur Abalos. *[Please be seated.]*

The esteemed members of the Diplomatic Corps; the International Justice Mission or IJM Chief Program Officer, Mr. Blair Burns; the IJM Vice President Atty. Samson Inocencio; the officials and the members of IJM; my fellow workers in government; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

As I was listening to the young lady --- and she is a lady --- I could not help but shed a tear to think --- to try --- to have to relieve the suffering that she went through. And to think how many other children are even --- as we're here, sit in this fancy hotel room, eating our fancy food, continuing to suffer the same fate as she has. And accompanying those tears that I just shed was a deep sense of shame because we have not done enough for the Philippines to now be considered the epicenter of... Let us not shorten it into a clinical term OSAEC. It is sexual abuse and exploitation of children. And I leave it to your imagination. And I would imagine in some cases your imagination cannot even begin to fathom what is done to these poor children, to our poor children.

And so we must do more. We must do more. The Filipino culture --- one of the most important part of the Filipino culture is family. We are known around the world for that. We are so well-known for it that we are --- Filipinos are the number one --- are the number one caretakers of foreign children all around the world.

I go and travel and meet important leaders all around the world and they say --- and I'm talking about kings and queens, and presidents and prime ministers --- and they say to me, "I was raised by a Filipina. My second mother is a Filipina." And that's what we Filipinos are. We love our families. We adore our children.

And for us to allow this to happen in our country, brings to me an overwhelming sense of shame because being in government, being in public service, we are not doing enough. We must do more.

However, I am happy that we have now together with the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking and the Department of the Interior and Local Government that we have had now this conference. And the IJM has organized this very important event.

We are here today to confront one of the greatest challenges of our time. The challenges that we face in government are always the challenges that are brought to us by the future. And what exemplifies our future more, what symbolizes our future more than our children. And that is why this strikes at the very heart of our society. It undermines the foundations of what we are, of who we are as a people.

In every community that is alive with the laughter and the chatter of children, there is a dark reality—where half a million Filipino, 1 in every 100 Filipinos has been victimized.

It is an appalling statistic. We cannot allow this to continue. We will not allow it to continue.

It is the horrible scourge of Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children or OSAEC, which remains widespread now in our country.

It's not a distant problem or the victims just faceless and nameless children. Perhaps we do not know them. Perhaps we are not related to them. But they are all our children. They are Filipinos. We do not even have to go through the exercise of trying to imagine, "Oh, what would I feel if it happened to our children?" It doesn't matter. Just look at the child. Think of any child, any child.

They live within our midst and several may be the sons, daughters of those people we know.

Their smiles, their brave smiles, innocent smiles conceal a pain that is our nation's shame, as the sad reality is that many perpetrators are the victims' families or relatives, the very people that we expect to care for them.

As this is a battle that we must not lose and we will not lose, this Administration created the Presidential Office for Child Protection or POCP, which is a critical step in our fight against this crisis.

The POCP will serve as the epicenter of our efforts, bringing together resources and strategies to ensure that every child in our country is protected and supported.

On the legislative side, such as the Anti-OSAEC and Anti-CSAEM Act as well as the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2022, also underscore our relentless pursuit to bring these perpetrators to justice.

Furthermore, our Tier 1 status in the Trafficking in Persons Report shows that we as a country have made earnest efforts and leadership in combating the crimes of human trafficking and OSAEC.

We have also set a global example of effective law enforcement collaborating with Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children [Center] or the PICACC.

The Philippine National Police-Women and Children Protection Center reported that it had rescued more than 1,099 victims of trafficking in persons and OSAEC and arrested more than one hundred suspects from 2022 to July 2024.

This might give us some satisfaction. If that is how many --- of how many that we have apprehended, if that is the number of the children that we have saved, I cannot help but think how many are still left out there. That is a minority. That is not the majority of the victims, that is not the majority of these perpetrators. That is the minority. And we need to do more.

It serves as a testament that this Administration has an unwavering dedication to ending this kind of abuse.

Be assured we are fully committed to ensuring in protecting our children, who are the most vulnerable members of our society. It is our utmost priority to protect our innocents, the innocents. Perfect little beings who are being hurt for money by the people that they trust.

So to everyone here, this summit is a significant waypoint—a moment to reflect on our progress and renew our commitment to eradicating OSAEC.

To our international partners, we extend our gratitude for your aid to us in continuing this fight. Your support has been valuable in our mission to save children, rescue victims, and give them a chance to start over.

As we move forward, let us reflect on our roles in these critical battles.

To the DSWD, the DOH, the DOJ, DepEd, DILG, let us stand firmly by our sworn duty to protect the innocent children who have no power to defend themselves and have only us to look to to do that for them.

Continue to develop training programs, ensure that our law enforcement, our prosecution, social workers, teachers, other public servants are well-equipped to handle these cases.

Strengthen our criminal justice system to the end that all who perpetrate this abhorrent crime are put behind bars and made to pay for what they have done. And everyone should think not only twice but three, but four, five, 10, 100 times before committing this abuse again.

I have said it before, I will say it again: this Administration will do everything – we will spare no effort – to combat these heinous crimes against our children.

The LGUs have a unique position as they are positioned to foster an environment where child abuse is not tolerated. Leverage your knowledge and experience to ensure that no child falls victim to OSAEC.

With the launching of #ReportOSAEC, we are hopeful that this will help increase community awareness of what OSAEC is, how we can prevent it, how we can help those who are suffering from these abuses, and the legal consequences for committing what we consider as the worst crime against humanity.

To our communities, this Administration implores you to be suspicious, be watchful, and report even the slightest inkling of abuse.

I reiterate my message in the State of the Nation Address, let us not turn a blind eye to wrongdoings because passivity enables evil to perpetuate.

One call to the Makabata Helpline 1383 can save one child.

Let us all make the Philippines the absolute worst place for those who abuse and exploit children.

To our victims and survivors, your stories continue to push us in the right direction; your extraordinary courage motivates us to do better.

Look at this young lady, what she has made of herself besides all the evil that has been perpetrated to her and the people around her. And yet she has made something of herself. And this is what we destroy when we allow these exploiters to continue doing what they are doing. That is what we destroy. We destroy that hope, that possibility, that life that is God-given and should not be taken away by anyone but God himself.

We cannot even begin to imagine the horrors that they faced. It's not their burden to carry alone. The entire government is with you. We hold your hand and walk along the arduous path towards healing and recovery.

As we were discussing many of the measures that we were trying to put into place, I reminded all the heads of the different agencies what we are trying to do here. What is the most important part of this work that we are trying to do here is to save the child, save that life. That should be always our primary consideration because life when taken away can never be returned. And for whatever we do, a part of that child's life has already been permanently taken away. Perhaps we can offer another option, another form, another chance at a good life. And that's what we have to always remember.

This is not about crime. This is not about money. This is not about exploitation. It is about preserving and saving and making sure that our future is bright. Our children are our future. Let us save them. Let us keep them safe. Let us keep them healthy. Let us keep them strong. Because that way we keep our future safe and healthy and strong. It is that existential in its importance.

We are resolute in our commitment to provide services that will help move the victims forward, such as therapy [and] reintegration through the DSWD and its partners, including of course the IJM.

Let us build a world where justice and compassion prevail, and every child's safety and dignity are upheld.

Dahil sa Bagong Pilipinas, inaaruga at pinoprotektahan natin ang ating mga anak; sa Bagong Pilipinas, binibigyan natin ng pag-asa ang mga biktima; sa Bagong Pilipinas, sinisigurado natin na may mananagot sa mga [nagkakasala].

Sama-sama po nating tapusin ang OSAEC!

Maraming salamat at mabuhay po kayong lahat. *[applause]*

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