

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK
Ref: PCO Dir. Robertzon F. Ramirez

SPEECH BY

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.

**AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2024 ASIA-PACIFIC MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK
REDUCTION**

[Delivered at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City | 15 October 2024]

Thank you very much to our Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary,
Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga.

The National Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro and other Cabinet secretaries who are here today; the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative to the United Nations Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, His Excellency Kamal Kishore; [Her] Excellency Uduch Sengebau-Senior, Palau Vice President and Minister of Justice; His Excellency Sainbuyan Amarsaikhan, Deputy Prime Minister of Mongolia; The Honorable Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and Rural and Regional Development Minister; ministers and delegates of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction; Ambassador Hae Kyong Yu and other members of the Diplomatic Corps; other distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

Good morning to you all and a very warm welcome to the Philippines!

We are a nation that is an archipelagic one consisting of over 7,600 islands and we take pride in our beaches, in our world-class diving sites, our breathtaking landscape -- and all these draw visitors from all over the globe.

And but while nature has gifted us with natural wonders, it also reminds us of its formidable power, over and over again.

Unfortunately, our beautiful country is located along the Pacific typhoon belt, in the midst of the Pacific Ring of Fire.

We are visited by more than 20 tropical cyclones and experience around 500 magnitude 4.0 and above earthquakes in one year. We also have around 24 active volcanoes.

These are compounded by the increasing frequencies of hazards brought about by climate change, which makes the Philippines at risk and our landscape even more – making our landscape even more complex, our people even more vulnerable.

Much has been said about the resilience of Filipino spirit, but let us remember: that strength was forged out of adversity—over centuries of facing storms and earthquakes, adapting, and rising once again with a renewed vision and purpose.

Just recently, the Southwest Monsoon or habagat, enhanced by Typhoon Gaemi (locally known as Carina), inflicted more than 82 million dollars in agricultural damage.

That figure only scratches the surface—the true measure of our losses lies in the human cost: the homes that have been destroyed and have to be rebuilt, the livelihoods that have been lost that may never come back, and the lives irrevocably changed.

Resilience and sustainability must underpin the national agenda of our economy. This recognizes that all our efforts in economic planning are fragile in the face of calamities and disasters.

For us, the stakes are existential, the consequences generational, and the policy environment increasingly complex.

However, this narrative is not unique to the Philippines.

Across the Asia-Pacific region, nations like ours grapple with similar trials.

We share a common struggle: navigating the balance between continued economic growth and dealing with the ever-present threat of disasters.

The Asia-Pacific region also stands as a testament to the unwavering spirit of its people.

From the tsunami in the Indian Ocean to Typhoon Haiyan in the Pacific Ocean, from the earthquakes in Nepal to floods in South Asia, our nations have conquered monumental challenges.

Still, we remain as the world's engine of growth, steering the global economic recovery in the wake of the pandemic.

We must strive to create a future where the need for recovery becomes less frequent, as we lay the foundations for a safer, more adaptive, inclusive, and disaster-resilient region.

So, as we convene for the 2024 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, we find ourselves at a critical juncture.

With the theme, "Surge to 2030: Enhancing ambition in Asia-Pacific to accelerate disaster risk reduction," we are now called to lead the global effort to reduce disaster and climate risks, protect our people, and build sustainable economies.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 gave the international community profound guidance in our disaster risk reduction efforts.

Our path now is to redouble and to synergize our efforts to accelerate its implementation.

It also remains crucial to align our goals under this framework with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Paris Agreement.

We must harmonize our approaches and pursue meaningful actions under these mandates to secure a sustainable and climate-resilient future.

The Surge to 2030 involves key steps: We must significantly increase our investments and develop financing mechanisms in disaster risk reduction.

Sustained and predictable data and financing would help address disaster risks better.

This entails ensuring that developing countries, particularly the least-developed countries, landlock countries, and small island developing states, are provided greater access to these resources to advance their policies and build disaster resilience.

For our part, the Philippines, as a climate champion, humbly accepts the role as steward of the Board of the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage.

This reinforces our commitment to improving the Board's operations and to contribute to the success of its institutional architecture.

We are hopeful for a Fund that will benefit climate vulnerable countries, many of whom are in our region.

Equally important, we enforced the guidelines on the issuance of green and blue bonds.

Our green bond market has been recognized by the Asian Development Bank for its potential to expand even further.

Our country's most promising sectors for growth comprise renewable energy, green buildings, sustainable agriculture, and water management.

Given our archipelagic nature and the looming threat of climate change, investing in the blue bond market is also essential to ensuring the responsible stewardship of our natural wealth, the safeguarding of our coastal communities, and the sustainable growth of industries like fisheries and tourism.

Second, we must embrace inclusion. Disasters disproportionately impact people, and they exacerbate existing inequalities.

Building stronger societies requires addressing the needs of the most vulnerable— the very young, the very old, the sick, the indigenous peoples, marginalized communities.

We must ensure that every voice is heard and every person is empowered to contribute to disaster risk reduction and receives the assistance that they need if the time comes.

Third, we must acknowledge that climate change and disasters are catalysts for human displacement.

This necessitates forward-thinking policies that create safe pathways for migration and to support those displaced by disasters so that they can rebuild their lives with dignity and security.

On our side, we remain steadfast in empowering our local authorities and working closely with our youth to implement nature-based and ecosystem-centered solutions that not only address their unique challenges, but also honor their local traditions and practices.

Fourth, innovation must be at the heart of all our strategies. Advancements in technology, data analytics, early warning systems can revolutionize our disaster preparedness and our response.

Fifth, coordination and collaboration are the cornerstones of our whole-of-nation approach.

By engaging all of our stakeholders, we ensure that we collectively identify the needs, address the gaps, and anticipate the risks ahead of us.

And sixth, fostering open dialogue is essential in bringing our sectors together, promoting both convergence and coherence in our efforts.

As such, we carry out regular assessments, regular critiques, ensuring that our policies on disaster risk reduction remain consistent and effective.

And seventh, we place great value on the engagement of our private sector, particularly in advancing investments and practices in environmental, social, and governance areas.

Through collaborative research, information sharing, and innovative financing, we continue to strengthen and deepen our partnerships with these key stakeholders.

And finally, we must advocate for stronger international legal frameworks that guide disaster prevention and response.

The Philippines is proud to lead the initiative toward developing an international legal instrument for the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters.

This endeavor aims to fill critical gaps in international disaster response laws, uphold the rights and dignity of affected persons, establish clearer obligations, and enhance humanitarian coordination.

As we chart our course to a more inclusive and resilient Asia-Pacific, let us draw inspiration from the stories of resilience that are embedded in our region.

From communities that rebuilt after Typhoon Haiyan to cities that fortified their infrastructure after earthquakes, to grassroots organizations that equipped citizens with life-saving skills—we are surrounded by many good examples of what is attainable when we act with foresight, determination, and purpose.

And finally, this conference presents us with a grand opportunity to send a powerful message to the world: The Asia-Pacific is not only prepared to overcome the trials of tomorrow—we are also ready to lead in disaster risk reduction and climate action.

As you take part in this important conference, I encourage everyone to experience the beauty and the culture of our country.

You will soon discover that the strength of our nation lies not only in the efficiency of our policies, but also in the indomitable spirit of our communities and the innate warmth of our people.

I wish you a fruitful and inspiring conference.

Thank you all very much. Good morning. Mabuhay tayong lahat! *[applause]*

--- END ---

