



ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ORGANIZATION
27TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
10 - 15 SEPTEMBER 2006 ▲ CEBU CITY, PHILIPPINES

Closing Speech

HON. RAUL DEL MAR
*(Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives
Republic of the Philippines)*

A YEAR OF LANDMARK ACHIEVEMENTS

My dear colleagues—

By your leave, the Honorable Jose de Venecia Jr., Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Philippine Congress and outgoing AIPO President, has left to accompany Her Excellency, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, to the Summit Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana, Cuba.

As a consequence, I have inherited the honor of closing formally this 27th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO).

The sweet sorrow of parting

After several days of deliberations, we have come once again to the sweet sorrow of parting—of saying goodbye to friends who have become even more endeared to us by the shared fellowship of these past five days.

Not only have we come to know each other more intimately. Even more important, we have all come to realize that—despite the cultural and socio-economic diversities of our countries—we do share a passion to lift up the lives of our peoples and to unite our region into one caring and sharing community. Over the years, AIPO has evolved into an effective forum for gaining more confidence and increased mutual trust in each other.

Speakers from the ASEAN member-states and from observer delegations have shared with us the ways through which their parliaments have brought benefits to their countries and peoples.

They have provided us with insights into how we can face up to the daunting challenges of grave threats such as terrorism, regional conflicts, economic competition, natural and man-made disasters, pandemic diseases—as well as social problems such as trafficking in drugs, women and children, among others. All these leaders have likewise voiced their support of our program to transform AIPO into a more dynamic, protective and practical conduit of progress between our member-states.

The achievements of the de Venecia Presidency

Every AIPO Presidency ends with solid achievements that encourage the next President to heights of accomplishment.

Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. has outlined for us how AIPO Year 2005-2006, has been a breakthrough period—in the sense that this year has seen—for the first time—practical cooperation between AIPO and the ASEAN leadership in bringing the vision of a Southeast Asian community to our countries and peoples.

Under his presidency, AIPO and ASEAN have institutionalized a regular yearly consultation meeting.

And for the first time in 27 years, the President of the ASEAN Leaders' Summit—and we're honored to have this year no less than Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo—addressed this Assembly in a video-taped message. In December this year, also here in Cebu, the new president of AIPO, will get his turn to address the ASEAN Leaders' Summit.

Which is why for the first time, too, AIPO and its mother-organization, ASEAN, are now marching in step toward a “caring and sharing community”, which is this Assembly's grand theme.

During this Assembly, the various committees agreed on landmark resolutions that impinge on the political, economic, and socio-cultural lives of our region and our peoples.

We have also reached organizational and structural decisions that will enable AIPO to rise to a higher level of inter-parliamentary cooperation.

Meanwhile our women-parliamentarians have also joined forces to call upon our various members of governments and national societies to improve the conditions of women and empower them in socio-economic development efforts throughout the ASEAN region.

These are all reflected in the Joint communiqué, which we just signed.

All in all, therefore, we can all congratulate this Assembly of ours on the quantity—and quality—of the work we did over these last five days in this gracious city.

Closing Message

Lastly, let me say how much of a pleasure—and an honor—it has been for us to have hosted this 27th AIPO General Assembly.

We hope that you go home with new friends made—old acquaintances renewed—experiences worth treasuring—and new insights taken to heart.

Traveling to any part of ASEAN is an instant lesson in the logic of regional unity—and an illustration of the strong foundations on which one Southeast Asia would stand.

As the two congressmen representing the City of Cebu, Organizing Committee Chairman Antonio Cuenco and I take special note of the kind and salutary tribute you delegates have made on the local arrangements for this Assembly.

The Cebuano hospitality—and those of the entire Philippine delegation—has been sincerely extended, and it comes from the heart.

There is more of this hospitality tonight. We're bringing the Caribbean to Cebu, and the fellowship program showcases Cebu's top-flight beach resorts, which are among our top tourist attractions and destinations.

May I express the hope that you would bring home with you fond memories of our beautiful city and province of Cebu, the Philippines and the Filipino people—memories fond enough to make you come back as friends and family.

Our Philippine Delegation looks forward to meeting every one of you in Malaysia next year!

Until then, daghang salamat (thank you), *mabuhay* (long live!), and have a safe and pleasant trip home.

FOR THE TURNOVER

I now have the honor to turn over the Presidency of the 28th AIPO to the Parliament of Malaysia.

I have no doubt that, under Malaysia's leadership, AIPO will reach new heights and greater accomplishments in 2006-2007.

May I now call upon Honorable Datuk Lim Si Cheng, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malaysia, to receive the AIPO gavel on behalf of the Malaysian Speaker.

Congratulations!