

Keynote Address

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I. Introduction

First of all, I'd like to thank my good friend Professor Torres for inviting me this morning as the Keynote Speaker for this convention on regional development for Eastern Visayas. You not only honor my person but the Armed Forces of the Philippines, particularly the Navy.

I'd like to speak to you this morning as a student of development administration as well as an implementor in government. Part I of the Four-Year Development Plan articulates societal aspirations expressed as developmental goals and directions set for the next five to ten years.

At the public hearings on the plan, President Marcos said:

"Development is addressed beyond growth towards social equity. It seeks to resolve the profound question of our urban and rural poor who are in the preponderant majority. In line with this developmental philosophy, the objective that ties together all immediate as well as intermediate objectives in our development plans is the improvement in the standard of living of our people. This is the ultimate goal and, in the context of our democratic revolution, a necessary element in the rebellion of the poor."

II. Meaning of Development

Development is a process of change. It is synonymous to "improvement" and is related to the idea of progress. Development is a whole. Its ecological, cultural, social, and economic institutions are political discussions that can or may be understood in their interrelationship.

Development may be discussed in three central elements:

- (1) it is geared to the satisfaction of needs;
- (2) it is endogenous and self-reliant; and
- (3) it is in harmony with the environment.

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Development is Geared Towards the Satisfaction of Needs

It begins with the eradication of poverty.

Half of the population of the Third World have never been to school and two-thirds of their children have no school to go to. The hungry, the sick, the badly-housed and the illiterate are the same.

In her book *Poverty in the Philippines*, Maria Lourdes Ramos says: "Experiences and reflections suggest this definition: Poverty is a particular living condition primarily characterized by deprivation of basic needs from a decent and successful human existence. To be poor is to be in want; to be perpetually in need of human essentials in spite of the daily efforts to meet the demands of survival. The poor are those who sweat so much for so little. They are those whose basic and irreducible needs exceed their means to satisfy them."

Poverty is the state of those who have no opportunity and/or enough skills to engage in productive endeavor. Thus, Myrdal calls the poor "the underclass of unemployed and gradually employed persons focused at the bottom of the society." Similarly, Oscar Ginates refers to the poor as the underprivileged and less endowed to be able to participate. They are the physical and economic invalids who are displaced by the market or never placed in it. The poor are those who are first to be affected unfavorably when the economy goes down. In an address before the World Bank, McNamara described absolute poverty as a condition in life so degraded by disease, illiteracy, malnutrition and squalor as to deny its victims basic human necessities.

Whether in food, habitat, health or education, it is not the scarcity of resources which explains poverty, but their distribution and inequality.

Food

Food crisis is not one of bad harvest. It is a matter of hunger and malnutrition from which the poor suffer. Hunger is due to the fact that the poor are deprived of the means either to produce and purchase food because the lion's share goes to the rich and powerful.

Habitat

Habitat is as basic as food. It includes shelter but it is also the space that society organizes for living and to carry on those activities necessary to satisfy all its material needs.

Health

There is a need to integrate health services into development services as a whole as well as to adapt health services to specific circumstances, using local resources to the maximum, instead of imitating models from countries in which conditions are different.

Education

Education in a new conception must become the permanent duty and responsibility of the whole of society towards everyone in it. It would be the means by which society advances itself, rather than a personal acquisition. Education would be a broad, cooperative effort by everyone in society, and it would not be divorced from work and production. Everyone would be a learner, a worker and a teacher.

Development is Endogenous and Self-Reliant

If development is the development of man as an individual and as a social being, and is aimed at his liberation and fulfillment, it cannot but stem from the inner core of each society. It relies on what a human group has—its natural environment, its cultural heritage, the creativity of the men and women who constitute it, becoming richer through exchange between them and with other groups. This is the meaning of an endogenous and self-reliant development. It stimulates creativity and leads to a better utilization of production factors. For each product, it does not ask the question: "How much can we get through exchange," but, "how much can we produce ourselves or with others." Thus the basis is laid for a search for new resources for utilizing known resources in new ways, and sometimes, for questioning the need for the product to reduce vulnerability and dependence. A self-reliant society is able to stand up better to crises; it is self-confident and has the means to sustain its dignity. Self-reliance applies to different levels—local, national, international. At the national level, it gives the economic content to political independence.

Development is in Harmony with the Environment

Geared towards the satisfaction of needs, endogenous and self-reliant development must necessarily take into account the environment—the framework and the very condition of the life of human societies. Survival and solidarity with future generations prohibit the transgression of the "outer limits" of the biosphere. At the same

time, the ecosystems, respected and used with imagination, can contribute, in particular at the local level, to the satisfaction of needs. These two themes are both a warning and a promise, reminding one that social relations and relations between social and natural systems are interrelated.

III. Regional Development

One of the major objectives of the Four-Year Development Plan, FY 1974-77, of the Philippine government is the promotion of regional development.

While regional development is an objective of the development effort, it is also a strategy that is utilized to reduce the disparities among the regions and provide for balanced economic and social progress of the country. Development is translated in terms of the number of irrigation dams, schoolhouses, health clinics, breeding farms, etc., to be located in various parts of the country over a number of years. Programs become meaningful when their locations and beneficiaries are pinpointed and their links to the total goals are defined. The land or sea dimension serves as the focal point in a development process envisioned for the populace.

Regional development is an approach to bring about the desired shift from an agrarian to an agroindustrial economy. Opportunities and wealth need not always concentrate in the Metropolitan Manila area and other urban centers. The underdeveloped parts of the Philippines which are the country's poverty areas demand and deserve to have a share of this wealth.

In practical terms, the government hopes to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor regions by giving the poorer regions the time and opportunity to pull themselves up, given the proper incentives. The policy of the government, therefore, has been to promote regional development and industrialization, among other national priority goals. Its objective is to correct the growth imbalance among the various regions and to establish a base for the expansion of industry.

Thus, regional development is an effective way of dispersing the benefits of development by accelerating rural growth.

IV. Challenge

If development is providing the satisfaction of basic needs such as food, habitat, health and education, let us examine the following facts and figures:

Mangahas conducted an income inequality study of ten regions in the Philippines in 1974. The results showed pronounced income inequality in the Ilocos Region and the Eastern Visayas Region.

In 1961, Eastern Visayas had the highest percentage of families living below the minimum subsistence income level. In 1965 and 1971, the highest percentage of indigent families was in Cagayan Valley.

On the national scale, the proportion of impoverished families composed a glaring majority of the population. The proportion of poor families was 86.8 per cent in 1961, 87.4 per cent in 1965 and 84.3 per cent in 1971. It would seem that almost the entire country is a social welfare clientele.

In the Philippines, an average of 74.2 per cent of all households are in dire need of housing. The largest need for social housing exists in Eastern Visayas where about 38 per cent live in dilapidated dwellings.

A survey of per capita intake of calories and proteins revealed that Eastern Visayas had the greatest differential between the recommended daily allowance and the actual intake.

Another study conducted by the Nutrition Council in their project "Operation Timbang" revealed an acute degree of malnutrition among Filipino children. Preliminary results pointed to Cagayan Valley and Eastern Visayas as the most malnourished regions. Only 13.7 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively, of the preschool children surveyed in those regions have normal weight.

This regional sketch in standard of living shows the magnitude of the problems which confront development planners: depressed areas in terms of economic growth, income, health, nutrition, housing and education, all of which are basic needs and necessities. And the poor are crying out for quick action — now!

Let us pierce through the maze of bureaucratic inertia and get things done. We say that the strength of a nation depends upon the character of its people. But how can 59 per cent of our population who are indigent, underclothed, undernourished, and underhoused, make us strong?

But a fresh wind is blowing in this part of the country—Region VIII. When scholars from the University of the Philippines, political scientists, administrators in government, development planners and administrators of the local development councils decide to meet and face these problems, I am sure battle lines will be drawn and the action would begin.

Good day and thank you.