

Welcome Address

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Admiral Ogbinar, Dr. Fernandez, Dr. Cuna, Dr. Tadena, Dr. and Mrs. Dolorico, provincial officials, regional directors, fellow public servants, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a real pleasure for us to welcome you to this conference on regional development. And I would like to congratulate the Philippine Political Science Association for holding this conference in Tacloban and for tackling the agenda for regional development.

Indeed, Region VIII, with the three cities included: Ormoc City, Tacloban City, Calbayog City; the five provinces: Leyte, Southern Leyte, Samar, Eastern Samar, Northern Samar; and the subprovince of Biliran, have become, in the words of no less than President Marcos himself, a "depressed region," an underdeveloped and underserved region. And it is well for us to gather together this morning to tackle the problem of regional development.

The region has all kinds of regional plans. In the same manner, Tacloban City has a one-year plan, a two-year plan, a five-year plan, a plan of development up to Year 2000, and even up to 2001.

All provinces have the same plans. And all municipalities of the region will have the same plan to jibe with the regional plan.

Despite all these plans, we see and always observe some problems in developing the region. The reason for this I think is because, as knowledgeable people say, "the process of development, like a scientific experiment, is a series of propositions," a series of positive linkages — links and relationships — which portray the transformation of inputs into planned developmental change.

And, of course, the first linkage is that if the government will provide the needed input, then a project will be achieved. Perhaps then, some economic and social changes would occur.

It is hypothesized that if such changes will occur, then there will be employment — increased employment — and perhaps, improved quality of life, and a stable form of government.

Mayor, Tacloban City.

Now the conference is a series of hypotheses and linkages. To me, it is important for a group like this to tackle the agenda of development because this conference will enable us, at least, to define our goals and enable us to evaluate our practices or our achievements at different levels. This is not, of course, the end of the development process.

This group is going to be a great help in discussing the plans that have been made and in evaluating them so that these will really be relevant and will be able to bring us to the goals that we are aiming for. After all, there is no development — there is no change — that will not really emanate from the people themselves, especially this group of people.

We have been talking of changes, innovations, but it is time to realize that there will be no real changes unless these come from the people — unless there will be transformation in people themselves.

And so I perceive our role here now as a forum for discussing these plans. And in this role, we are going to be of help to regional development.

We owe it to ourselves and to others, to sharpen our skills. First of all, I would like to ask ourselves to sharpen our skill of perception of the changes in an expanding world. Because unless we perceive the various states of change in our expanding world, we might not be able to help in any forum of regional development.

Then, I think we should also perfect our skill for expression and communication because, obviously, that will be needed in a forum like this.

Finally, we should be able to develop our powers of creativity and adjustment. Many plans and programs have failed because of vested interests and resistance. Unless we are open-minded and really see our plan and development as a series of hypotheses, like a scientific experiment, I think Region VIII will continue to be underdeveloped.

But if all of us here and all educational leaders of this region will really make use of a forum like this as a means of looking at the plans as a series of well-guided hypotheses, then there will be no reason for us not to have a Region VIII that will be developed, modern, and progressive.

Once more, we welcome all of you to this seminar-workshop. I pray and hope that this will be fruitful, especially in making our region a happy one so that our people will really be able to have the improved quality of life that all of us seek.

Thank you.