

Statement
Deputy Speaker Giorgidi B. Aggabao
House of Representatives
Republic of the Philippines

“On the Creation of an Asian Parliament in the Asian Century”
7th APA Plenary Session, December 1-3,2014
Lahore, Pakistan

His Excellency **Syed Nayyer Hussain Bokhari**, Chairman of the Pakistan Senate and APA President,
Honourable **Mushahid Hussein Sayed**, Chairman of the Organizing Committee,
Dr. Nejad Hossenian, APA Secretary General,
Distinguished Guests and Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Philippine delegation, I would like to extend my warmest greetings of friendship and appreciation to the Senate of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for their warm welcome and excellent preparations and hospitality extended to all the delegates of this Meeting.

Mr. President, the vision of APA constituting itself into an Asian Parliament—a legislature of a one Asian Community – is a formidable project. Unlike our colleagues in Latin America and Africa, who have established continent-wide regional parliaments, we in Asia have reached a juncture in our collective history when we must come

together to explore the feasibility of setting up our own regional legislature.

Imagining the Future

Aware that we live in a very diverse region with differences running across our history, cultures, political-economic systems, languages, among others, makes the establishment of an Asian Parliament challenging. Yet we live in global village where everything is interconnected and the problems we face are increasingly borderless, compels the peoples of Asia to work with one another to overcome common concerns.

With more than four (4) billion people, Asia is the biggest and the most populated continent in the world. The 'next billion consumers' in the global economy will be based largely in Asia and the region's middle class will increase five-fold quintuple in size by 2030. Asia already accounts for 40% of the world's GDP and about 65% of global growth.

The 21st century is aptly dubbed the "Asian Century," mainly because of the emerging tilt of economic wealth and power from North America and Europe towards Asia which would entail a significant shift in favour of Asia in terms of political weight and power in world affairs.

As regional cooperation in different parts of the world expands, Asia has also experienced remarkable growth in regional cooperation. In addition to bilateral relations, Asian countries cooperate with each

other in various other groupings such as ASEAN, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council.

While potential for expansion of Asian integration is considerably high, the actual process of integration has faced many impediments. Politically, Asian Nations share many goals and aspirations and face many common threats and dilemmas.

Common threats and challenges, which have a potential unifying role, are numerous, ranging from eradicating regional poverty to rooting out international terrorism. However, there are significant areas of political divergence, which have constrained closer cooperation among Asian countries. Historical misunderstanding and mistrust, exacerbated by on-going territorial disputes, constitute the root cause of insufficient political congruence. Divergent levels of economic and social development are also among other significant impediments to integration.

The formation of an Asian Parliament therefore is key to inspire and promote further integration in Asia. Integration in Asia should be considered as a prelude to further peace, prosperity, democracy and justice in Asia. This could only be achieved if both Asian Parliaments and Governments would assume a role to play in the promotion of this

ideal goal and a fair share of responsibility in facilitating and materializing its requirements

In this context Mr. President, the Philippine is committed and supportive of the ideal of organizing and operating a supra national legislature. A decade and a half ago, the Philippines proposed the idea of parliamentary integration in Southeast Asia through the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO), which it helped transform into the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) in 2006. However the establishment of an ASEAN Parliament has yet to be realized but we remained hopeful and confident that we will rise up to the occasion and meet the challenges head-on.

The Way Forward

In the new global order, we have “to bring a sense of common purpose to our Asian community.” Our annual dialogues, exchanges and cooperation will prepare the ground for elevating our arrangement to the next level.

The journey will be long and paved with obstacles, but the time to imagine has arrived. For our part, the Philippines supports the idea of moving in a gradual and inclusive manner. Like all regional parliamentary groupings, our vision can not be built in a day. The process of integration proceeds step by step. Beginning perhaps with the creation of a study group within the APA which will carefully undertake a feasibility study on the possibility of establishing an Asian

Parliament. We can discuss the membership and terms of reference of the *Preparatory Committee for the Creation of an Asian Parliament*. This Committee shall be tasked to draw up the steps, the mechanism and the timeframe for the transformation of APA into the Asian Parliament.

To be sure, it may take a while before a formal regional parliamentary structure in Asia is established. This is why the role of APA in engaging parliamentarians and providing for a venue for dialogue is highly commendable.

It is hoped that, as we endeavour to cobble and craft an Asian parliament, the enormous benefits to be reaped by such a supranational parliament would be shored by the peaceful initiatives aimed at easing geopolitical tensions. I urge my fellow parliamentarians to firm our commitments to expedite the resolution to recent threats to the political stability and security in the Southeast Asia. I urge the APA, in demonstration of its leadership to call for a cessation of activities that escalate tension in the South China Sea. Finally, I urge APA to support the Philippine paradigm for dispute resolution which is to bring disputes to international arbitration to bring the problem to a final and enduring resolution in accordance with international law.

We begun by saying that creating an Asian Parliament is a formidable objective but we are entering a new age of transformation when in our diversity we may create for us a Pan Asian unity built on the common values and principles. In a journey of a thousand steps, today we take

the first steps with sustained cooperation towards the birth of an Asian Parliament.

Thank you very much and Mabuhay.