

MESSAGE

In the afternoon of 12 June 1898 in the town of Cavite-Viejo, Filipinos gathered at the residence of General Emilio Aguinaldo to witness the first Philippine national flag unfurl as the San Francisco de Malabon Band played the *Lupang Hinirang*.

Reciting the Declaration of Philippine Independence, our people promised to support freedom “with our lives, our fortunes, and with our sacred possession – our honor.”

Indeed, the birth of our nation was marked by the great sacrifice of Filipinos. Those who fought for our independence risked and placed everything they had – their fortunes, their families, and their very lives – on the altar of freedom. Fueled by their ardent vision of a free and independent nation, propelled by their love for country, and driven by faith in the Filipino people, our forebears proclaimed to the world the Philippines, a nation born.

With freedom in their hearts and strength of spirit, a diverse people united.

Yet, as our country successfully won the struggle for national independence more than a century ago, let us not forget that it is only one of the many freedoms that we continue to aspire for as a people in these modern times.

Today, our country and our people would like to attain an independence that would allow us to live in prosperity and in harmony, free from fear and wanting.

“*Kagitingan, Kagalingan at Kasipagan Tungo sa Tunay na Kalayaan*”, this year’s Independence Day theme reminds us that, indeed, freedom is not bestowed. It is something that we must together achieve.

As a nation, we have shown our resilience and remained unwavering in our efforts to advance the welfare of our people – uplifting the lives of our poor and nurturing our children for a brighter dawn in our country, in our region and in the family of nations.

As the Philippines marches forward, the men and women of the Department of Foreign Affairs, guided by the three pillars of Philippine foreign policy – national security, economic diplomacy and assistance to nationals – remain steadfast in advancing the interests of the Philippines and the Filipino people in the world community.

With our people’s courage, valor, and hard work, I am confident that our country is on its way towards realizing our collective aspirations for peace, prosperity and progress.

Today, after we have raised our flag and sung our national anthem, and as we renew our pledge to support freedom with our lives, fortunes and honor, let us remember the sacrifices of Filipinos overseas and those they left behind, whether a century ago or a century hence.

Mabuhay ang lahing Pilipino! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!

ALBERTO G. ROMULO
Secretary of Foreign Affairs

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Pasay City