

**State of the Nation Address
of
His Excellency Benigno S. Aquino III
President of the Philippines
To the Congress of the Philippines**

[This is an English translation of the speech delivered at the Session Hall of the House of Representatives, Batasang Pambansa Complex, Quezon City, on July 27, 2015]

Thank you, everyone. Please sit down.

Before I begin, I would first like to apologize. I wasn't able to do the traditional processional walk, or shake the hands of those who were going to receive me, as I am not feeling too well right now.

Vice President Jejomar Binay; Former Presidents Fidel Valdez Ramos and Joseph Ejercito Estrada; Senate President Franklin Drilon and members of the Senate; Speaker Feliciano Belmonte, Jr. and members of the House of Representatives; Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno and our Justices of the Supreme Court; distinguished members of the diplomatic corps; members of the Cabinet; local government officials; members of the military, police, and other uniformed services; my fellow public servants; and, to my Bosses, my beloved countrymen: Good afternoon to you all. [Applause]

This is my sixth SONA. Once again, I face Congress and our countrymen to report on the state of our nation. More than five years have passed since we put a stop to the culture of "wang-wang," not only in our streets, but in society at large; since we formally took an oath to fight corruption to eradicate poverty; and since the Filipino people, our bosses, learned how to hope once more. My bosses, this is the story of our journey along the Straight Path.

Just last Friday, we inaugurated the Muntinlupa-Cavite Expressway. This is the first Public-Private Partnership project that we approved, and the first such PPP project opened to the public under our administration. Under the previous administrations: It was as if the government had to beg the private sector just to gain their participation. Now, companies are the ones seemingly courting the government—for MCX in particular, we were paid a premium of P925 million just so that our private partner could have the privilege of building the infrastructure we need. In fact, they are so confident that this project will earn them a profit, that they said the first month of toll operations at MCX is free.

We have indeed come so far. And, in order for us to appreciate just how far we have travelled, let us recall where we started.

When we came into office, we found a citizenry that had grown desensitized to the many allegations of lying, cheating, and stealing in government.

Those in power boasted of the country having enough classrooms. In truth: classes had to be held in four shifts. Students went to school while it was still dark, and others would go home long after the dark of night had well and truly fallen. All of them were left in the dark because they were not accorded sufficient time in the classroom for learning.

Our predecessor took pride in "uninterrupted growth" during her last SONA. Scrutinize what she said, however, and you would realize that a significant portion of this growth was fueled by remittances from Filipinos who had lost hope in our country. As they say: People were voting with their feet. If I were to imitate that style of governance, I would be loath to claim a success borne of forcing my countrymen to escape our shores.

As the 2004 elections approached, more than 700 million pesos were allegedly used to buy fertilizer that was not suitable for crops; the endeavor was costly; and in many instances, the farmers who should have received the farming supplements never saw it. We ask: Who was nourished by such fertilizers? Definitely neither the farmers nor their crops. Perhaps you also remember the NBN-ZTE scandal. We investigated this in the Senate; someone said there was an attempt to bribe him. When we undertook an inquiry, this person did not want to testify; he claimed executive privilege. Of course,

we couldn't summon the sitting President—hence, the only one we could question was her henchman accused of bribery. Naturally, he denied the accusation.

During those times, even children became familiar with the word “scam.” You might also remember “Hello Garci,” to which the answer was a mere “I am sorry.” The genuine bank accounts of the nonexistent Jose Pidal. The attempt to convene a Constitutional Assembly, so that they could stay in power for the rest of their lives. There was Executive Order 464, which tried to stifle the truth. The declaration of a State of Emergency, in order to do away with the checks and balances for Martial Law as enshrined in the 1987 Constitution. There were midnight appointments. The policy known as Calibrated Preemptive Response, which was used against protesters. Even on the level of grammar, this is wrong. How could a response come before anything else? It's like saying you replied to someone who never texted you.

These were the headlines that greeted us every time we had breakfast in the years before we came into office. The moment we assumed the presidency, we began to unearth anomaly after anomaly. In my previous SONAs, I have already mentioned some of them: In the National Food Authority, they allowed the debt to bloat from P12.3 billion pesos in 2001, to P176.8 billion in June 2010. Even worse: they continued to import rice, only to have it rot in warehouses. In PAGCOR, a billion pesos went to coffee. In the MWSS: excessive bonuses, one on top of the other. For the Laguna Lake: an attempt to waste over P18 billion just to play with mud. Indeed: I could not comprehend how those behind such controversies could willingly benefit from the suffering of our countrymen.

Every government official takes an oath to do right by our countrymen and to uphold the law. But it was clear: our predecessor did precisely the opposite. We were all witnesses to the most appalling example, when 58 Filipinos were massacred in Maguindanao in November 2009. To think about committing such a crime was already heinous. To do it, which they did, was even worse. The worst offense of all: Their belief that they could get away with it, because they were in power—which is why they carried out their plans in the first place. These are only a few examples; there are many others.

With this kind of situation, can we really blame our countrymen for losing sight of hope, and consequently, leaving our country?

Like you, the thought of giving up had crossed my mind. When my mother died, my confidence diminished further; our family's leader and inspiration to pursue change was gone. At her wake, someone approached me and suggested that I run for the presidency. My immediate response: I am not a masochist. I was one of the people calling for an end to impunity and wrongdoing; I understood just how dire the situation was. I was also certain they had deliberately hidden details from us, and the real problems were bigger than what we knew. When you called me to serve, my question was: If I am unable to solve these problems quickly, how long will it take before my bosses lose their patience, and instead direct all their anger at me?

One of those who convinced me to run was Alex Lacson. He said: “To simply put an end to all the abuse would suffice. To stop the hemorrhaging would be enough.”

Let us listen to him:

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Alex Lacson

In 2008, our country was ranked by the World Bank as one of the most corrupt in the world. Our self-confidence and morale as a people was very low.

At the time, many of my friends and I were looking for a good man, not just a good politician to be our president in 2010.

Then, President Cory passed away, and Senator Noynoy spoke at her funeral. That is when we truly saw him.

My friends encouraged me to lead the public call to urge Senator Noynoy to run for president. My friends and I went to the house of Senator Noynoy in Times Street. We brought a yellow drum and we encouraged the public to write letters.

Within 24 hours there was an outpouring of public support for Senator Noynoy to run for public office.

I did not expect him to be superman and solve all our problems in the country; we expected him only to begin reform.

Mr. President, thank you for heeding the call of the people in 2010, and thank you, too, for respecting my beliefs, even as we disagreed on a number of issues.

Mr. President, continue to lead our country on the right path.

[Applause]

From the start, we already knew that corruption was the root of all our people's suffering. Thus, our battlecry: where there is no corruption, there will be no poverty.

Tremendous perseverance, courage, political will, and faith in God and in our fellowmen were needed in order to breathe life into this ideal. Of course, the masterminds of the old system were not meek lambs, willing to see the end of their opportunity to take advantage of others. They used, and continue to use, their influence and wealth to fight our agenda of change. They also used their power to prepare life preservers for when the time of judgment came.

The Ombudsman who should have been appointed to guard against corruption allegedly played blind to all the scandals of the past administration. She was impeached in the House of Representatives, and resigned from her post before she could be tried in the Senate. The Chief Justice who seemed to have a bias for the one who appointed him, was proven to have hidden wealth and properties not disclosed in his SALN. He was impeached in the House and convicted in the Senate.

To replace them, we appointed men and women with integrity and independent minds. The new Ombudsman: Conchita Carpio-Morales. The new Chief Justice: Ma. Lourdes Sereno. Now, she has sufficient time to implement reform in the Judiciary. [Applause]

Even in other agencies, we appointed honest and fearless leaders. We immediately placed Chairperson Grace Pulido-Tan in the COA. In the Executive, we likewise appointed uncompromising persons: Commissioner Kim Henares in the BIR and Secretary Leila de Lima [applause] in the Department of Justice. They did not back down from any challenge in fulfilling their mandates. To all of you, I give my heartfelt thanks.

Whether in the top, middle, or bottom of the bureaucracy, so many have been suspended, removed from their positions, made accountable through cases filed against them, or even imprisoned. If there is anyone who still doubts that justice is blind in the Philippines, it would be best if they turned their attention to the three senators currently detained, or to a former president still under hospital arrest.

There are some who say we should move on. Personally, I believe in what George Santayana said: Those who forget the mistakes of the past are condemned to repeat it.

Just take a look at the actions of those who have wronged us. They will first work to ensure we forget what they have done. After this, they will say, "Have pity on us." They already took advantage of us; now they are trying to take advantage of the Filipino's innate penchant for forgiveness, in order to escape accountability. The next step: they will find a way to return to power. Isn't that their master plan—so that they can continue to take advantage of us?

I learned from my parents, from the church, and from the processes of our laws: Whatever reconciliation must come from the confession and repentance of those who have committed wrong.

Can you remember an instance in which anyone said, “I’m sorry I stole from you and abused you; I am ready to change”? For my part: We can only move on once justice has been attained. [Applause]

We continued to reform our institutions, in order to refocus them towards their true mandates. For example: Government Owned and Controlled Corporations. Appointees to GOCCs swore to safeguard our people’s money. The sad fact is, even when the GOCCs were mired in debt, they showered themselves with benefits and incentives left and right. If we liken their institutions to cattle, they’d just as soon butcher the cow for meat, even as they milk it. This is why in the past administration, dividends collected over nine and a half years only amounted to P84.18 billion.

Under our administration: the number of GOCCs has already been reduced by shutting down those deemed irrelevant, and yet because of improved management: the dividends we have collected in the five years we have been in office have now reached P131.86 billion. [Applause] It isn’t unlikely that, before we step down from office, we will be able to double the dividends collected by our predecessor who had much more time to accumulate these funds. [Applause]

This is the same commitment we have shown in the BIR, which is the biggest revenue-generating agency of the government. When we stepped in, the highest collection on record was in 2008, at P778.6 billion. We surpassed this by leaps and bounds. In 2012, the BIR collected P1.06 trillion—the first time in our history we have breached the 1 trillion mark for collections. [Applause] Last year, the number went up to P1.3 trillion; this 2015, we will collect up to P1.5 trillion. [Applause]

We only needed five years to match, surpass, and almost double our predecessor’s record high—and we did this without imposing new taxes, as promised, apart from Sin Tax Reform. [Applause]

How did we do this? It was simple. I believe that Commissioner Kim Henares is a kind person, but those against whom she filed cases might have a different opinion. Commissioner Kim Henares spared no tax evader. [Applause] 380 cases have already been filed against those who attempted to evade taxes. She also made the system for tax payment more efficient, and made clear to everyone their civic duty to contribute to the development of our country.

For the National Budget: under the previous administration, the budget was always reenacted, whether partially or fully. In 2007, for example, it was almost April when the General Appropriations Act (GAA) was approved. It was already worrying that projects that had been completed received funding once more. Even worse: Even the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses, including salaries, were included in this reenacted budget. What this means: funds were allotted again for salaries—even if all had already received what was due them for the first three months of 2007. I wonder: Where did the excess funds that were allotted and requested for go?

What we have proven: if the Executive proposes a reasonable budget, the dialogue with the members of Congress will go smoothly. The faster the GAA is passed, the quicker services will reach our countrymen, and the sooner will we be able to alleviate their suffering.

The message was clear: We are serious about change; the playing field is level. The result: Confidence in our economy.

When we began, I did not think that we would immediately win back the global community’s confidence in the Philippines. I only thought of fixing the crooked system to prevent our people from sinking deeper into poverty. Let me ask you: Did it ever occur to you that we would continue rising in global competitiveness rankings, and that we would be recognized for the speed with which our economy has grown? In fact, the Philippines is now being called “Asia’s Rising Tiger,” “Asia’s Rising Star,” and “Asia’s Bright Spot.” [Applause]

Now, for the first time in history, we are unanimously deemed investment grade by the most prominent credit rating agencies. This is a signal to businessmen that it is worthwhile to invest in the Philippines. The risks of doing business here have decreased. Now, with lower interest rates and more flexible debt payment schedules, more investors are finding it attractive to bet on the Philippines. Through the institution and expansion of businesses, commerce becomes more lively,

competition strengthens, and even more opportunities are created. All this has been a direct result of reforms we made along the Straight Path. [Applause]

Just look: back in 2010, net foreign direct investment in our country was at \$1.07 billion. In 2014, net foreign direct investments reached \$6.2 billion. [Applause] This is the highest ever recorded in our entire history.

The numbers for domestic investments are likewise impressive; now, Filipinos are betting on their fellow Filipinos. Let us compare: from the time this was first measured back in 2003 until 2010, the amount of approved domestic investments totaled just P1.24 trillion. Under our watch, from the third quarter of 2010 until the end of 2014, the amount invested by our countrymen in the market reached P2.09 trillion. [Applause]

In manufacturing: I admit, during my first year in office, one of the things furthest from my mind was the idea that we could reinvigorate this sector. The industry faced many challenges: electricity, for one, was both expensive and unreliable. It was also no small feat to establish facilities here, because of the large investment involved in buying machines and training employees. This is why, back then, we had to import even low-tech electric fans.

Thanks to the reforms that have restored confidence in our nation, manufacturing growth has accelerated—from 3 percent annually between 2001 and 2009, to 8 percent from 2010 to 2014. [Applause]

It is clear: The Filipino can compete. In the past, our only selling point was low wages. Now, investors are bringing to our country factories that produce hi-tech equipment: from aircraft components, electric tricycles, printers, and other digital media products, to high-quality medical devices like aortic catheters and devices for in vitro diagnostics and hemodialysis treatment.

Let us listen to a businessman who will tell us of the new business climate in the Philippines:

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Peter Perfecto, Makati Business Club

One of the most important things this administration has accomplished was reversing the corruption trends of the previous administration.

Without the rule of law, the advantage went to corporations that were complicit with the systemic bribery and a faulty tax system.

President Aquino has walked the talk. He has delivered on his promises. They arrested the former president, the three senators, and ousted a Chief Justice who were all once thought to be “untouchable.”

The strong message has been sent. Because of the rule of law and the commitment to good governance this administration has made, our foreign direct investments rose from P2 billion to P6.2 billion.

We have made a huge leap forward: jumping 33 places in the rankings set by the world Economic Forum; and according to them, this is a result of this administration’s anti-corruption agenda—all because of the changes that this government has enacted. It is the responsibility of each Filipino to learn from these recent achievements and ensure that we continue moving forward with the coming administration.

[Applause]

We all know that the primary measure of economic improvement for the common Filipino is the creation of jobs. Let us look at what we’ve achieved in this area.

Every year, around 80,000 new entrants join our labor force. Now, consider the fact that there are reports of overseas Filipinos returning home. In 2011, our Department of Foreign Affairs reported that there were around 9.51 million overseas Filipinos. Based on the latest estimates in December 2014, that number went down to 9.07 million. It is reasonable to say that a good number of the estimated 400,000 Filipinos represented by that decrease came home and were able to find work. [Applause]

Despite the fact that there are new entrants, returnees, and previously unemployed Filipinos, our unemployment rate still dropped to 6.8 percent last year. This is the lowest recorded in a decade. [Applause] Let me be clear: We created permanent jobs; we did not hire an abundance of street sweepers during the period the labor survey was conducted, just to boost results.

Together with creating real jobs, we are also fostering a good relationship between labor and management throughout the country. Let us compare. In the nine and a half years of the previous administration, the number of strikes that occurred were 199, or roughly 21 strikes for each year. In our five years in office, the total strikes were only 15. [Applause] In fact, in 2013, there was only a single strike recorded in the country. This is the lowest recorded in the history of DOLE. [Applause]

It is because of this that we are truly impressed with Secretary Linda Baldoz and our labor and management sector. [Applause] To Sec. Linda: you are not only efficient; you are also very positive which makes you the type of colleague who is a pleasure to work with. That is why you are considered the Pastor of the Cabinet. Thank you, very much, for all your efforts, Linda. [Applause]

The transformation has indeed been vast. Before, the signs we would always see proclaimed, “No Vacancy,” didn’t they? Today, announcements that say, “For Immediate Hiring” are scattered everywhere; you need only open a newspaper to see classified ads from many companies who are hiring. Some of them have even been getting creative with incentives. There’s this one company that says: just come in for an interview and your breakfast is on them. Once you’re hired, they’ll cover your treat to friends and family to celebrate your new job.

Some businessmen have even mentioned to me that they are finding it difficult to hire accountants. I remember when I was younger, a lot of people were taking up BS Commerce, Major in Accountancy. When I visited Bicol University, I mentioned this to their president. I had to ask: Am I correct in the knowledge that your university has an accountancy program? Their reply: Yes, but even we are having trouble filling our accounting department. Why? Their president said that their students, even in their third year of college, are already being recruited by accounting and auditing firms. [Applause]

This is happening precisely because we have worked to address what is called the job-skills mismatch. In the past, so many of our countrymen were saying that they had no jobs, even when there were so many unfilled positions listed in the PhilJob-Net website. The simple reason: the skillset of our countrymen did not match what the market needed. The solution to this was also simple: Talk to prospective employers and ask them what skills are demanded by the positions they are opening. Now, it is in these skills that we train Filipinos, so that they can maximize opportunities.

The principle behind our strategy of governance: instead of giving our countrymen fish, we will teach them how to fish. We are ensuring that the progress we have made and the opportunities that have been created can be maximized by our fellowmen. We cannot wait for the benefits of growth to trickle down to the poorest Filipinos; we cannot leave it to chance, or hope for the best. Our commitment: Inclusive growth.

The agenda: assistance, knowledge, skills training, and health, to ensure that no one is left behind. One of our mechanisms: the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program.

We have vastly expanded the scope of this program. Now, more than 4.4 million households are feeling the benefits of this program. [Applause] This is extremely far from the 786,523 households covered by the program when we entered office. This year, 333,673 graduated from high school; they are part of the first batch of beneficiaries under the expanded Pantawid Pamilya. 13,469 of these youth graduated with honors and a variety of awards. [Applause] In fact, the two beneficiaries I met were accepted into Civil Engineering, a quota course in the University of the Philippines.

All of these beneficiaries will gain important knowledge; instead of entering menial jobs once they graduate, it is almost certain that they will find jobs that will pay them a decent salary. Their income tax alone will repay the state's investment, and we will be able to continue the cycle of empowering those in need. The brighter future that awaits the honor students the program assisted is just an added bonus.

Let us listen to one of those assisted by Pantawid Pamilya.

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Alyannah, CCT beneficiary

I work much harder now. I knew the trials my family faced because of poverty. When we were enrolled in the Conditional Cash Transfer program, I saw that people wanted to help us. I knew they wanted nothing in return—but, for me, the only way I could repay their kindness was through my studies. The money we get from the government was never wasted. We were able to finance all of my school expenses.

I was so happy when I got into my dream school, the University of the Philippines. The CCT program gave me a chance to get a good education, which helped me finish high school; and now I'm on my way to college. I know this program is on the receiving end of a lot of criticism, but I want to tell President Benigno Aquino that they need only to look at me—at us. We are proof that the money set aside by the government for this program is not a dole-out. The money goes towards a worthy pursuit, which I know one day will help uplift the entire country.

[Applause]

Under Pantawid Pamilya, in exchange for assistance, the primary focus of beneficiaries must be the education of their children. This has already borne early fruit: according to studies conducted by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, in 2008, there were 2.9 million out-of-school children in the country. The years passed and our population grew, but in 2013, only 1.2 million out-of-school children remained. Let me emphasize the difference: 1.7 million. [Applause]

It's as if we filled around 42,500 empty classrooms with students. Of course, apart from the Pantawid Pamilya, the Alternative Learning System also helped to ensure that even indigenous peoples and street children are not left behind.

And yet, there are still some who ask: Where are the results of Pantawid Pamilya? Our answer: Oh come on. They seem to think that Pantawid Pamilya is like a magic tablet that, once taken by a child in kindergarten, turns that child into a college graduate after only a few hours. [Laughter and applause] Perhaps, they did not have enough time to study during their time; let us help them count: K to 12 lasts 13 years, while my term only lasts for six. Now we see who's trying to deceive us.

There are even some who had the guts to raise an outcry and shout: There are leakages in Pantawid Pamilya. Then we discovered they used data from 2009, just to have something to criticize. Let me remind them: I became President halfway through 2010; perhaps you should be asking another president to explain the alleged leakage. [Applause] I guarantee that, when the time comes that the beneficiaries of this program are contributing to the economy, those who are criticizing it today will be falling over themselves to proclaim that they are the father or mother of the expanded Pantawid Pamilya.

Now, in the sector of education: we are making sure that the deficits of the past are erased and the needs of the present are addressed, even as we prepare for the future.

In just our first two years in office, we were able to close the backlogs we inherited of 61.7 million textbooks and 2.5 million school chairs. In 2013, the backlog of 66,800 classrooms was finally eliminated and the backlog of 145,827 teachers was likewise addressed, with the help of our LGU partners. [Applause]

According to the estimates of DepEd, from 2010 up to 2017, the total amount of new students: 4.7 million. This is because of the increase of enrollees and the implementation of the K to 12 program. In order to meet this vast increase, we need to add an estimated 118,000 classrooms to what we already have. 33,608 of these have already been constructed. This year, we are slated to construct more than 41,000 more. Funds for the remaining 43,000 classrooms have already been included in the proposed 2016 budget that we will pass tomorrow, which we hope you will approve. [Applause]

The number of teachers we will need are estimated at 130,000. In 2014, we have already hired 29,444. This year, the total number of teachers we target to hire: 39,000. The remaining 60,000 positions will be covered in the proposed 2016 budget, which we hope you will approve as well. [Applause] According to Bro. Armin, the sum total of the classrooms our administration has constructed and the teachers we have hired exceeds the cumulative total of classrooms built and teachers hired in the past twenty years before we came into office.

We have already turned over 73.9 million textbooks that will be followed by an addition 88.7 million this year. In 2015 as well, 1.6 million school seats were delivered to schools, and we will add another 1.6 million before the end of the year. After eliminating the existing backlog in classrooms, we constructed or continue to construct 33,621 classrooms, while allotting funds for the construction of 41,728 more. For teachers: 39,000 are already being hired by DepEd for this school year alone.

Tomorrow, we will submit the budget for 2016; included in it are funds for an additional 103.2 million textbooks, 4.4 million school seats, 43,000 classrooms, and 60,000 new teaching positions. Everyone can see: we will not leave further sources of headaches for those who will succeed us. [Applause]

Let me be clear: We implemented K to 12 because it is not practical to cram learning in a 10-year basic education cycle. May I remind you, that we are one of the three countries left in the world with a 10-year basic education cycle. The credentials of our countrymen working overseas are already being questioned; there are also some who have been demoted because our diplomas are supposedly not proof of sufficient knowledge. If the past educational system can be likened to a mango induced to ripen under artificial circumstances; now, we are ensuring that the abilities of our students are fully developed, so that they can take hold of their futures.

Let us listen to a story that is proof of this:

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Rezia Joy Jianoran

My father has been a jeepney driver all my life. When I was in my second year of high school, my mom suffered a stroke. I didn't ask, but I knew that they couldn't afford to send me to college.

Instead of dropping out of school, I decided to continue my studies under the K to 12 program. My chosen track of specialization was the Drafting Technology course.

Part of the K to 12 program is the career immersion. I was assigned to CLP Metal, a metal fabrication company.

I was tasked to design machines. This machine was designed to de-hair pigs. Once a pig is processed, after several seconds, it comes out without any hair.

A machine like this can only be bought abroad. Because of the design by CLP, we're able to adjust to the budget restrictions of our customers.

I'm extremely proud because when you think about it: how many 19-year olds can say they have designed a machine?

I'm proud that I'm a K to 12 graduate because I can now support my family. And I'm learning while I'm earning.

[Applause]

Should these graduates choose to go into tech-voc, the programs we enhanced are already waiting for them. 7.8 million have already graduated from the different courses of the Technical Vocational Education and Training overseen by TESDA. Under the Training for Work Scholarship Program alone, the number of graduates have already reached 821,962. Perhaps you are wondering: what is their situation today? According to studies, 71.9 percent of graduates were able to find employment right away, compared to the 28.5 percent recorded before. There are even some industries breaking records: for example, the employment rate for the entire semiconductors and electronics industry has already reached 91.26 percent—just a little more, and we'll be at 100 percent. [Applause]

Secretary Joel Villanueva told us before of an OFW forced to return home; she thought there was no hope to improve her lot in life. Then, she studied “hilot wellness massage” in TESDA; now, her spa already has 4 branches. In my last SONA, I also told you of a PWD who was once a barker; he is now an escalation supervisor in a BPO. [Applause]

A success story from the Sari-sari Store Training and Access to Resources Program, or STAR: there was a sari-sari store owner who used to earn 800 pesos a day; now, her daily earnings have reached 4,000 pesos. If you sum everything up, her earnings are more or less equivalent to my salary, even if we do not experience the same type of stress. [Laughter]

How did this happen? She was trained in bookkeeping, inventory management, accounting, and other disciplines. What's extremely impressive: the STAR program even teaches students how to ensure that their profits are maximized.

Let us listen to one of those who benefited from TESDA's program:

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Ma. Theresa Tomaro, TESDA Star Program trainee

My husband and I were both unemployed when we started training with the STAR program. We were taught how to manage and grow a business.

When we started our sari-sari store, it was made out of bamboo. Now, its walls are made of concrete.

This not only helps us, but also our children. We are able to give them good lives.

I've been able to sell a lot of things. My income has doubled since then.

I'd like to thank Secretary Joel Villanueva because of their program, I was able to have the opportunity to show my ability to run my own business.

[Applause]

Now, on the sector of health. To many Filipinos, falling ill poses a serious challenge to the fulfillment of their dreams. Families climbing the ladder of progress, return back to zero once they are struck by illness. Not only are their savings emptied, they also fall deep into debt.

When we came into office, only 47 million Filipinos were beneficiaries of PhilHealth. We have almost doubled this number: just this past June, PhilHealth coverage has reached 89.4 million Filipinos. [Applause] The transformation we wrought: Before, during elections, new PhilHealth beneficiaries seemed to sprout up like mushrooms. Instead of the basis for membership being the interest of Filipinos, it became manipulated to serve the electoral candidate's interest. Now, we have corrected that system.

There is more good news in the sector of health. In 2012, we announced: If your family is part of the lowest quintile, or the poorest 20 percent of our population, and you are seeking treatment in public hospitals, then we guarantee that you will not have to pay a single centavo. Beginning in 2014, this

has expanded to cover the next quintile of our society. This means that for the poorest 40 percent of the population, treatment in public hospitals is free. This is the care that some have called inefficient and uncaring. The only thing I have to say to them, as Aiza Seguerra said back in the day: I thank you, bow. [Applause]

Now, let us hear some of the results of the improved PhilHealth program:

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Danilo Espiritu, PhilHealth beneficiary

I was diagnosed with quadruple clogs in the coronary area.

We didn't know how we could afford the operation. The first hospital we went to said the operation would cost 300,000 pesos. At [the Philippine General Hospital], it would cost 700,000 pesos. At UST hospital, they said it was 800,000 pesos.

But when one of the doctors learned that my wife was covered by PhilHealth, he said our case qualified under the Z-Package, and we could push through with the operation.

We just stood up then and went to fix the paperwork, and I was provided the opportunity to extend my life.

The service I got at the hospital was comparable to that received by a private hospital patient. I wasn't considered a charity case. I was a full-fledged paying patient, and PhilHealth paid for my operation.

To be honest, I didn't pay for anything. The little money that we did save, we were able to use for the post-operation expenses.

I'm thankful for PhilHealth and our government for implementing these kinds of projects, which genuinely help people in need.

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Governor Lilia Pineda

Sin Tax should have been implemented earlier; it's the answer to our goal of providing universal healthcare. It was a big help to the province of Pampanga: in the past, the Capitol spent over 400 million pesos a year in health aid. But when the Sin Tax Law was implemented, those who needed healthcare were covered by PhilHealth. We are truly grateful to President Aquino because the project provided a huge relief for Pampanga. The money saved was used to fund other important projects. The proceeds of the Sin Tax also went towards the construction of a birthing station, hospital renovations, and the construction of health centers. We're so thankful to the President for caring for the poor who suffer sickness.

[Applause]

Let us again return to the story of the past five years. We went after the corrupt and we cleaned the systems, which redounded to confidence in our markets. Businesses came into the country, opportunities expanded, all while we empowered Filipinos to gain decent employment. They patronized these businesses, which, having recognized that the playing field is level, know they can profit without having to resort to illegal activities. They then expand their operations, and employ even more people. This is a cycle: justice, trust, economic growth, the creation of opportunities, progress. Boss, this is the very spirit of, "Where there is no corruption, there is no poverty." [Applause]

And we did not just achieve change. The transformation we are experiencing today has already exceeded the expectations we had in the beginning.

The Cadastral Survey, which was started in 1913, has been completed by us. It took almost a century for those who came before us to complete 46 percent of this survey. The more than half left to be done, we finished in just five years in government. This Cadastral Survey identifies the boundaries of the land covered by each city, municipality, and province in the Philippines. In ARMM, for example, it was as if the land gave birth to more land: according to the maps, there are only 1.2 million hectares belonging to the region, but if we were to add up all the lands being claimed, they would reach a total of 3.7 million hectares. Now, because we have fixed the land record system through the Cadastral Survey, no new land will be birthed in ARMM.

In 2011, we conducted an inventory of sitios, and we identified those that were still without electricity. Through the Sitio Electrification Program, we were able to bring light to 25,257 communities identified through this inventory. On top of this, because of the use of solar energy and other technology, even far-flung and isolated areas that would be difficult to connect to the grid already have electricity. Now, around 93 percent of sitios in the Philippines have already been energized; the DOE has guaranteed that, before we step down from office, all the rest of the sitios from the 2011 tally will have electricity. [Applause]

Now, let us watch a farmer who has benefited from our Sitio Electrification Program.

Translated transcript

It was difficult when we didn't have electricity; you just had to bear with it. We could only power our homes with fuel sources.

We first got electricity this July, and we were so happy when switched on the lights here at home for the very first time. We can now watch movie tapes or listen to good music. The children are now able to study at night. I'm even able to work at night because now I can charge my spotlight during the day, and because I'm more productive, I earn more.

Our lives have changed for the better now that we finally have access to electricity. We're able to be more efficient—an example would be our weaving. With sewing machines, we can create more beautiful designs, which we can sell at a better price. Food processing needs equipment, which runs on electricity. Students can use the Internet for research. Electricity has brought good things to Bauko. Congratulations to our President for making Bauko a better place to live in.

[Applause]

In the sector of aviation, there has also been a steady stream of good news: in 2013, the International Civil Aviation Organization lifted the significant safety concerns it had imposed on our country back in 2009. In the same year, the European Union allowed our flag carrier to resume its flights to Europe. The following year saw another local carrier receiving approval from the European Union, while the US Federal Aviation Administration upgraded us to Category 1, from the Category 2 downgrade we had received in 2008.

Because of these developments, incoming and outgoing flights are increasing, and it is also becoming easier for tourists to fly around the Philippines. Even better news: just this June, the EU Air Safety Committee removed its ban on all our air carriers—the first time that it has lifted its ban on the entire civil aviation sector of a country. Now, all our airlines will be able to fly directly to the United Kingdom, Italy, and other countries part of the EU.

In seafaring: in 2006, the European Maritime Safety Agency or EMSA was already questioning our compliance to the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers. Because of this, there was a threat that the EU would no longer recognize our maritime education certificates. If we did not act, there would have been the chance that an estimated 80,000 Filipino seafarers working on European boats would be out of jobs.

MARINA and the DOTC went to work quickly in order to match our maritime education certificates to global standards. To this day, the EU continues to recognize our certifications. Come EMSA's next audit, which will begin in October, MARINA guarantees: We will definitely pass. [Applause]

To Sec. Jun Abaya: May you not waver in your resolve, even when it seems that some have forgotten all that you have done for our sailors, ICAO's lifting of the significant safety concerns it had imposed on our sector, the European Union's lifting of the ban on our airplanes, and the Federal Aviation [Administration] upgrading us to Category 1. It was also you who banned boats from setting out to sea during typhoons, which helped to keep passengers away from danger. It is now rare for us to receive news about ships sinking during typhoons. All of these achievements have seemingly been cast aside, because of the complicated challenges in the public transport sector. The biggest example of this is the MRT.

Few mention that we have partners from the private sector in this endeavor, who remember their entitlements, but seem to have forgotten their obligations. This partner of ours is supposed to be in charge of maintenance. In 2008, there should have been a general overhaul of the MRT, but upon DOTC's inspection, only token cosmetic changes were undertaken. This lack of care practically guaranteed the breakdown of our trains. Is it not in the interest of all companies to make sure that they get their money's worth from their investment? Yet, they allowed the situation to deteriorate, to the point where, at very short notice, they just passed the job of improving the MRT onto us.

When we made moves to undertake improvements, suddenly, they wanted to take back the responsibility of maintenance. However, their proposal was significantly more expensive than ours. This would, of course, translate to added expense and aggravation for our people. We did not agree to this, and began the process of obtaining new train coaches. But because the MRTCA was adamant, they were able to obtain a TRO on the procurement. That is why the MRT situation has come to this.

Sec. Jun: You, I, and the entire population of Metro Manila are not pleased with what is happening. The private sector relegated their responsibility to us; when we made moves to provide a solution, they blocked us. It is clear that our agenda and that of the MRTCA will never meet. Now, we are taking steps to buy out the corporation. Once this is fixed, the state will be the sole decisionmaker.

While we are undertaking this process, we are already implementing immediate maintenance work. Bigger, more long-term solutions are also set to arrive. Next month, we can expect the delivery of the prototype for new coaches; once this passes scrutiny, beginning in January, three coaches will be delivered every month until our order of 48 coaches has been completed. The process to obtain new rails is underway, together with the upgrading of the signaling and automatic fare collecting systems; all this, we expect to be completed before we step down from office. The power supply of our trains will be upgraded before the end of 2016. There are 12 escalators that will be fixed before the end of the year, while the procurement for the rehabilitation of 34 more escalators and 32 elevators is ongoing. Let me remind everyone: When it comes to these matters, we cannot take shortcuts in the processes; we do not want our measures to be hampered by lawsuits left and right.

There are some who say that I wear blinders, when it comes to those who have long been my companions on the Straight Path. Me? I see the good things, but I also see the bad. Am I the one with blinders? Or is it those who insist on seeing only the bad things?

On our Armed Forces: Back in November 2010, tensions arose once more between North and South Korea; there were fears that war would break out in the peninsula. We needed a plan to evacuate the 46,000 Filipinos in South Korea, as well as the eight Filipinos in North Korea.

When I asked the AFP about the assets we could use in an evacuation, they said that the Air Force has a lone C-130. The shortest duration for a round trip? 10 hours. The capacity: around 100 people. I made some calculations: We needed to move 46,000 Filipinos away from conflict, which meant that, under the most ideal conditions, we would need 460 round trips, which would take 4,600 hours each. This is equivalent to 200 days of travel. No one can count on an old C-130 to cope with such heavy usage. If we deployed ships, each could carry 1,000 people at a time, but we would be lucky if each round trip could be completed within 10 days. Should further conflict break out, there was the chance

that the entire situation would have been over by the time we evacuated of our people. We took immediate action to address these limitations.

Now, from one functional C-130, we now have three at our disposal, and we are planning to acquire two more. There are others to accompany them: The first of three C-295 medium lift transports has arrived, with the other two arriving within the year. We also expect the delivery of two more light lift transports before the end of 2015. [Applause]

If we ever encounter another spate of problems like what happened in 2013, we are going to need more assets. When Yolanda struck, our docks were destroyed, and our ability to deliver aid was hampered. In such situations, landing craft utilities are invaluable because of their ability to dock on any shore. Now, we have increased the number of our landing craft utilities from four to ten. There is the BRP Tagbanua. By next week, two Landing Craft Heavy will arrive from Australia; the turnover of these vessels was very generous: they even came with spare parts and generators. We plan on buying three more; once all the paperwork has been put in order, the processes to procure them will begin. These vessels will reduce our dependence on the kindness of other nations; we will be able to accelerate delivery to different parts of the Philippines, and more promptly send aid, supplies, and other heavy equipment such as bulldozers, which are needed for clearing and relief operations. [Applause]

To better watch over our territory, we have also acquired 12 FA-50 fighters to replace our F5 fighter jets that were retired in 2005. The first two units will arrive in December, and the rest of the deliveries will be completed by 2017. We have also acquired war ships such as the BRP Gregorio del Pilar and the Ramon Alcaraz, seven of 13 AW-109 helicopters, six of eight Bell-412 helicopters, 617 troop carrier trucks, and 50,629 assault rifles. Our target is to obtain two more frigates, six Close Air Support Aircrafts, 142 armored personnel carriers, and other new items such as 49,135 units of force protection equipment, 2,884 grenade launchers, and an additional 23,622 assault rifles. [Applause] In total, we have completed 56 projects for modernization, and I have approved 30 more. Compare this to the 45 projects completed by the three administrations that came before us combined.

Let us listen to one of our servicemen from the Air Force:

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Jun Perry, member of the Philippine Air Force

For the record, Sir, our Air Force now has actual force. There was a joke or stigma back then that the Air Force was all air and no force.

I've only recently joined the Philippine Air Force, but I spent four years in the Philippine Military Academy, where we learned of the value of air power and air defense. During those four years, we found that the Philippine Air Force was losing its strength. But luckily the long wait is over.

In December of 2012, President Aquino signed RA 10349. Now, the Philippine Air Force is receiving adequate advancement. It boosts morale. I've heard confirmation from our Army classmates themselves. One of them even said: "Mistah, when I heard the sound of the chopper taking flight, I was so inspired."

This is a dream that has slowly, but surely turned into a reality.

[Applause]

As for our police, for the first time in our history, each of our policemen has his or her own firearm. Furthermore, to improve the capacity of our police force to shoot, scoot, and communicate, we have distributed 302 patrol jeeps, which are only part of the 2,523 that we have procured. We have also distributed 179 of 577 new utility vehicles, as well as 12,399 handheld radios. We are likewise procuring 30,136 long firearms, 3,328 investigative kits, and another 16,867 radios. Let us listen to some of our policemen, who talk about how these efforts have helped them in their work:

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Melvin Velasquez

When I entered the police service in 2003, I was issued a .38 revolver. Sometimes some of the criminals we encountered were equipped with high-powered weapons. The .38 revolver paled in comparison to the ones used by criminals. In fact, I had to buy my own gun.

It is difficult for us law enforcers when we encounter situations where we really have to risk our lives.

It was a big change when all policemen were finally given their own guns. We know that we can depend on the firearms issued by the government to us.

Those of us in the service dream of owning our own house and lot; it was only during this administration that such a dream was realized.

As a low-ranking law enforcer, I really feel the reforms instituted by our President—one of which is the value accorded to the national police. The only way we can possibly repay all these good things is by fulfilling our duties in the correct and right way—even if it means sacrificing my life.

[Applause]

Our drive to improve our police force's equipment is complemented by our "work smarter" strategy. This has been brought to life by Oplan Lambat-Sibat, whose pilot program was implemented in Metro Manila. We studied how criminals operate and strategically deployed our policemen. This is how we have caught the "big fish" gang leaders, dismantled syndicates, and lowered crime rates across the nation.

During our term, almost 163,000 people on the wanted list have been apprehended by the PNP, more than 1,000 gangs have been neutralized, and 29,294 unlicensed guns have been confiscated in the country. In NCR: from January to June of 2014, there was an average of 37 cases of murder and homicide every week. Thanks to Oplan Lambat-Sibat, this has gone down to 23 cases per week as of June 2015. In terms of robberies, thefts, and carnapping incidents in the same period: the weekly average in NCR has gone down to 444, from 919.

Just last week, Dexter Balane, the leader of the robbery and holdup group in cahoots with the Martilyo gang, was apprehended by our police force. Also in the apprehended list are the notorious Tiamzon couple, Commander Parago, and other cadres of the CPP-NPA-NDF such as Ruben Saluta and Emmanuel Bacarra; there is also the elusive Jovito Palparan, as well as the leaders of the BIFF, namely Basit Usman, Mohammad Ali Tambako, Abdulgani Esmael Pagao, and the international terrorist Marwan. [Applause]

It is clear for all to see: The State nurtures its men and women in uniform, and they are abundantly reaping this care. Together with new equipment, we have also increased the combat pay of our soldiers, as well as the subsistence allowance of the entire uniformed services. We have put up more than 57,000 housing units for our men and women in uniform, and this number will reach 81,000 before I step down from office. [Applause] In our camps, we also have livelihood programs, and among those benefiting from these are the soldiers who have been wounded or disabled in the course of fulfilling their duty. To heighten our focus on them, I have already ordered our AFP to work together with our Cabinet and implement initiatives that will ensure that those who have sacrificed for the nation will have decent livelihoods. [Applause]

Let us now talk about infrastructure. I remember when I was a Congressman in Tarlac: During summer, the Tarlac River was like a desert. During the rainy season, the river would surge and overflow, with the MacArthur Highway among the areas affected by flooding. I asked, who is in charge of flood control in our district? We approached the Pampanga River Delta Project. They said that the Lower Agno Project had jurisdiction over us. Then, when we went to them, they told us to go back to Pampanga. Instead of helping us, they chose to point fingers at each other.

The time of skirting responsibility has ended. On the Straight Path, long-awaited infrastructure projects are constructed one after the other. I have already mentioned some of them: There is the Lullutan Bridge in Isabela, which our countrymen in the province had anticipated for two decades, like

Rodito Albano; it is now open. [Applause] The Jalaur River Multi-Purpose Project, in Iloilo, was conceptualized around the time of my birth; we have recently broken ground for stage 2 of this project. [Applause] The Balog-Balog Multipurpose Project Phase 2 in Tarlac was planned in the 1980s. It has now been approved and the bidding process has already started.

Construction of the Basilan Circumferential Road started in back in 2000, [applause] but was long-delayed because of conflict in the province. Hostile elements have blocked its completion because as soon as it is constructed, they will have a more difficult time escaping the law. The delivery of services to the area would also be expedited, thus weakening their influence on the locals. The vast majority of the road is now passable, and only three bridges are still being finished. [Applause]

I have already mentioned the Muntinlupa-Cavite Expressway, which opened last Friday. The first two stages of the Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway or TPLEX are also open; it is the same for the Phase 2 of the STAR Toll. When the Cavite-Laguna Expressway Project, the C-6 Phase 1, the Metro Manila Skyway Stage 3, and the NLEX-SLEX Connector Road are completed—all the more will the benefits of our infrastructure strategy reach even more people. [Applause]

To address flooding, we have the ongoing repairs and maintenance of our flood control projects. Among these is the Pasig-Marikina River Channel Improvement Project Phase 2, which was completed in 2013. The high-impact flood control projects for the NCR and its surrounding areas are slated for completion in November, and our target is to complete the Blumentritt Interceptor Catchment Area by next year. The Laguna Lakeshore Expressway Dike project, meanwhile, will be awarded this December.

I am sure that everyone can see: It does not matter if local officials belong to our party, or if we won in these provinces; the only question we ask: Is there a need for this project? Let us listen to some of those we have helped:

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Governor Elias Bulut

When the President first ran for senator, he lost in our province. When he ran for President, he lost again. In spite of that, the President still helped our province. [Applause] We are witness to his style of governance. The administration recognizes the problems of the region and responds based on need, rather than considering the votes they earned here. Our province used to be neglected—because of the meager funds given to us by previous administrations. People here had to walk for about two days to get to their destination. With the construction of this new road, so many opportunities are going to open up for the people of Apayao. [Applause] Agriculture here is booming, and the people finally feel that there actually is a government that looks after them. To the President, we hope you can come over, so you can see what you've done here. What used to be far is so much nearer now because of the good roads you've built.

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Rep. Mercedes Alvarez

When I met the President in Bacolod City, I thanked him because our road was already finished; he said, "Don't thank me. Thank our bosses." And of course he told me not to lie down on the road again. [Laughter]

What happened before this was that I was on my way up to Candoni, and I saw the road that the DPWH had worked on was finally completed. I was so happy that I decided to take a picture right there.

Travel time has been cut in half, thanks to the new national road. Candoni used to be a very isolated area. Investors didn't want to make their way there because of the state of the roads. But now the roads are good; public transport ply these routes. Students now don't have to walk all the way to school because now they can commute. When you plant sugarcane, you have to bring it all the way to

the central market. But now, with our new roads, planting will be easier, more economical, and cheaper.

Mr. President, on behalf of the people in Cauayan, Hino-baan, Ilog, Candoni, Kabankalan, and Sipalay in the province of Negros Occidental, we want to thank you for your commitment, your projects, and your programs. Mabuhay po kayo!

[Applause]

To Governor Bulut, in the Senatorial election of 2007, I was only 20th in the hearts of the people in your province, and I was only 4th during the presidential elections. But given all the infrastructure we have built, I do not think anyone can say that you aren't in the hearts of the Filipino people. You yourselves have witnessed that when it comes to projects, our basis is need, not votes. [Applause]

Now, to Congresswoman Alvarez, who has, on a number of occasions, posed lying down on the roads we have built in her district: I am sorry, Chedeng, but the next time you lie down on the road, I will have you arrested. [Laughter] The violation: obstruction of traffic.

Our strategy is clear: in constructing roads, bridges, and other infrastructure, we reduce the suffering where we must, and we accelerate the delivery of benefits. I only ask that we all contribute in the effort, and that we be willing to make sacrifices.

For example: to address flooding in Manila, we pushed for the construction of a catchment area, which was protested by a particular university. They said that some of their old buildings could be affected by the project. Another example: there is already a need to retrofit the Guadalupe bridge, because it is vulnerable to earthquakes. But can we close down this bridge without completely shutting down EDSA? This bridge cannot be fixed through conventional means; we need to open up an alternative path. One proposal estimates that 70,000 vehicles would be able to pass through the route. Thus, if we can get this done, we can retrofit Guadalupe. The problem is that the chosen path for the route has been protested by a number of groups. They agree that Guadalupe has to be retrofitted, and they also agree with our plan to address heavy traffic along EDSA, but they do not want to be inconvenienced by the structures we need to construct. Such an attitude delays the construction of much needed infrastructure.

There have also been times when assistance was not only denied; roadblocks were also put in our path by officials on the local level. For example, there was an area devastated by a calamity. We went there as soon as possible; I was greeted by the Congressman and the Mayor, but it was the City Administrator and Vice Mayor who spoke with me. We told them: the DPWH has the necessary equipment, and we are ready to put up temporary shelters; all we need is land on which to construct them. Their answer: There are 30 hectares that can be used. Unfortunately, when I returned, not a single bit of land was turned over to us because they said they were using them for something else.

That is just one horror story. For our part: we are here to help. We will do everything in our power to give as much assistance as we can, in accordance with the law. If they do not want to cooperate, the only thing I will say is this: Next year is an election year, and our Bosses will be the ones to decide who has alleviated, or added to, their suffering. [Applause]

Let us now move on to the area of Public-Private Partnerships. If we add together all the solicited PPP Projects of the past three administrations, the grand total: 6 projects. Under our watch, the number of solicited PPP project: 50. Of this number, 10 have been awarded; 13 are being bidded out; while 27 are still in the pipeline. You can judge the difference for yourselves.

Back then, no one would join these projects; now, private companies are competing with one another, and are even paying us premiums. The premiums we have received from our private sector partners in the PPP have reached P64.1 billion, which goes directly to our national coffers. [Applause] Each successful project redounds to even greater confidence in the Philippines, which will in itself help accelerate the process of putting up the rest of the infrastructure we need. The suffering of our people will be lessened, and may even come to an end.

As for infrastructure about to be constructed, my sole request is for all of us to calm down. The procurement process is long; in fact, four months to complete the process is already considered fast. You could be considered lucky if the computer you ordered is delivered within that time. Just imagine the process when it comes to the construction of bridges.

For my part: It doesn't matter if I am unable to preside over the groundbreaking or ribbon-cutting. What is important is that these projects are well-planned and legal, so that when they are approved, construction can proceed quickly; the quality of the structure will withstand anyone's scrutiny. The Cabinet already knows this: When we have Cabinet or NEDA Board meetings, I have sometimes joked that attendees should bring their own blankets because the meetings will likely go on until late evening. This happens because I examine each detail carefully, so that when we present these projects to our Bosses, they will also say, "We approve of this because the process has been transparent, and we're sure that these projects will benefit us."

Without doubt, the transformation we are feeling is vast. Whereas before, the capacity of Filipinos to hope was wavering; now, according to the latest Social Weather Station survey, eight out of ten Filipinos believe that the Philippines can be—if not already is—a developed nation. [Applause] There is also a survey from Gallup Inc., which has been in business for 80 years now and is considered the oldest and one of the most respected polling agencies in the world. They asked the citizens of 145 countries: "Would you say that now is a good time or a bad time to find a job?" The result: The Philippines ranked number one in terms of job optimism for the Asia-Pacific region, and number two in the entire world. [Applause]

Indeed: our countrymen are confident in the stability of their future. Even newly hired employees today can make regular payments on cars or condominium units. Given this, it should not come as a surprise that, just last year, car sales in the Philippines grew by 27 percent. The belief now: we can afford to pay not only the down payment, but also the monthly amortizations as well. With so many of our countrymen able to purchase cars, two major automobile companies in the country now take two and half to three months to deliver cars to buyers. In my own experience, the first time I was employed, I computed how long it would take for me to buy my own car. The result of my calculations: it would take me 20 years, and that's for a secondhand vehicle.

I was also given the chance to speak with the leaders of two big foreign companies: one already has a factory here, while the other intends to enter our market. Both of them expressed a strong interest in setting up research and development facilities in the Philippines. They recognize the potential and talent of the Filipino, which they believe can help them maintain their edge in their respective industries. They asked us: Can you supply us with the hundreds of employees with master's and doctoral degrees in engineering that we need? The DOST's response: "Of course." I even said: If companies would start hiring for high-tech industries here, perhaps our countrymen would come home and accept lower pay, so that they could be with their loved ones. Their answer: There's no need to lower the salaries; we will match whatever they are earning abroad. [Applause]

Even when it comes to our fisheries sector, the way the world views us has changed completely. Just this April, the European Commission lifted the yellow card warning it had imposed on the Philippines. In the past, there were some problems with the documentation and tracking of caught fish; for this reason, the Commission could not ascertain whether the fish were caught legally. Our administration immediately worked to prevent the Philippines from being included in the EU's blacklist, and thus avoided any ban on our exports. I later learned that when Secretary Procy Alcala was in Belgium, [applause] he was told that the Philippines should not resent the attention if other nations with yellow card status approached us. After all, we are the ones in a position to teach them the initiatives and steps to resolve the problem. [Applause]

I also remember how, in the beginning, I felt that leaders of some countries only spoke to us because they were obligated to do so. Some even seemed to be scolding us when I first interacted with them. Now, we receive invitations for State Visits one after the other, with all these leaders offering praises. Some leaders even go so far as to propose that we could arrive in the morning, and that they wouldn't take it against us if we leave at noon, so long as we make the visit. Once, I was even surprised to receive this question from the leader of a progressive country: "What is your secret?" Of course, since bragging isn't in our nature, my response was: "Our secret is that we followed your good example."

There are also instances when we and members of our delegation were asked: “It’s really exciting in the Philippines now; is your term truly limited to six years? Can’t anything be done to fix this?” Every time, our answer is: “We once had a president who did everything he could to stay in power. We need to make sure that the doors that would lead to such a situation will never be reopened.” [Applause]

Of course, even if there is evidence of concrete transformation left and right, there are still those who oppose the Straight Path. They say: We work slowly. They say that when they become President, without a doubt, our lives will improve. Those who are of an advanced age will probably answer this with a raised eyebrow and an “Oh really?” The younger generation will simply say: “Yeah, right.” [Laughter and applause]

We ask: How will they do this? They say: We’ll take care of it. We ask, where are the details and concrete plans? How will they fulfill these promises? Again: We’ll take care of it. It’s like they think they can pass off these kinds of vague answers as solutions to the problems we face.

Unfortunately, no medicine has yet been invented to help those who play deaf and blind. [Applause] My advice: At times when our intelligence as a people is clearly being insulted, we should just change the channel; we might benefit more from watching a sitcom.

Now, I wish to talk about legislation, which I hope will be passed during the term of this Congress.

The most important of these: the Bangsamoro Basic Law. [Applause] To those who oppose this measure: I believe that it is incumbent upon you to suggest more meaningful measures. If you do not present an alternative, you are only making sure that progress will never take root in Mindanao. Let me ask you: How many more of our countrymen will have to perish before everyone realizes that the broken status quo of Muslim Mindanao must change?

I invite you to listen to some of those who can benefit from this law:

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Nor-ashia Binatac, 4Ps beneficiary

Before, because we were poor, we had no food. We only had sweet potatoes. That’s it. That’s all we’d eat for breakfast and dinner.

It’s a hard life when you’re a farmer. You work hard to till the land; and when you sell your produce, you can only sell them for so much.

I felt terrible because I saw how just difficult it was for my family to cope. I used to think and wish that I had the opportunity to finish my studies—so that I could help my family leave this horrible state of poverty.

I was in 6th grade when they rolled out the Conditional Cash Transfer program here. It was a big relief to see my father have money for my studies. I thought, before this program, I didn’t even have a notebook or a pair of shoes. Now, with the support of government, I can really focus on my studies, so that I can help my parents one day.

I’d like to thank the DSWD and the government, because they thought of doing this for the poor. If it weren’t for them, our lives wouldn’t have changed.

[Applause]

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Nadjieb Sanquilla and Hadid Hassan, MILF combatants

Sanquilla: The injustice during that period was indescribable. Because it was Martial Law, they saw us Moros as mere animals. We were being killed and massacred with no remorse. My family was

among the victims of those massacred by the soldiers. That is what hurts the most; this is why we are here today. We joined the Moro Islamic Liberation Front to fight for our rights.

Hassan: When I joined the MILF, our principles were premised upon *nasshur awis-shahada*. For example under President Estrada's administration, the people of Mindanao were under the threat of annihilation. Of course, any Muslim would think to defend those principles.

If you are a Muslim, you are part of the Bangsamoro. You were, therefore, viewed as a terrorist, and would not be given any work—because you might end up destroying the company.

The Sajahatra has now arrived. We were more encouraged by this: we learned and applied what we learned. For me, this may be the path for our brothers and sisters in the Bangsamoro to live peaceful lives, and have the wherewithal to lift themselves out of poverty.

Since 1972, I have never experienced a peaceful Bangsamoro; but today, if the agreement is fulfilled, with Allah's blessing, we might finally be able to live in peace.

[Applause]

I also wish to put forward the bill on the Rationalization of Fiscal Incentives. Once enacted into law, this will correct the many loopholes in the provisions of our incentives and will rationalize taxation for our businesses. We also ask for the urgent passage of the Unified Uniformed Personnel Pension Reform Bill, so that we can finally set up a sustainable and just pension system for our uniformed services. I cannot stress just how important the passage of this law is: at present, we already need trillions of pesos to fund the pensions of our servicemen. We need the authorization from Congress to address this very complicated situation.

Tomorrow, you will receive the proposed budget for 2016. We have never failed to pass the national budget on time; thus, it is my hope that we will continue this correct practice, especially that we are now in the final stretch of the administration. [Applause]

Also, might I share: There used to be a time when I was against depriving a person the right to run for office, just because he had a famous family name. Why would we pass legislation to stop a person who really wants to be a public servant?

But I have realized: There is something inherently wrong in giving a corrupt family or individual the chance at an indefinite monopoly of public office. It is exactly for that reason that, when someone suggested that I stay on as President, even just for three more years, I myself argued against it. If I agreed to this suggestion, I would open the door for such a practice to be repeated in the future. And we cannot be certain if the person who will succeed me will possess sincere intentions—he may instead choose to lord it over our people to pursue his personal interest. I believe it is now time to pass an Anti-Dynasty Law. [Applause]

It is because of this Congress that laws that now stand as the solid foundations of transformation were passed. To those in the House of Representatives and the Senate, especially to your members who have been our partners on the Straight Path for all these years: Thank you for the Philippine Competition Law, for the Act Allowing the Full Entry of Foreign Banks, [applause] and for the amendments to the Cabotage Law. Thank you for the Sin Tax Reform Act. Thank you for the Responsible Parenthood Act. [Applause] Thank you for all the other meaningful laws that you passed. Indeed: so much is achieved when we have a Congress that is determined to usher in real progress. [Applause]

A while ago, I thought it best to speak about where we came from, in order to give sufficient context for the challenges that we faced, continue to face, and will still face, and also for the criticism hurled at us. All of this censure, ridicule, and abuse, I accepted as part and parcel of the opportunity to serve you. The truth is, I did not have to go through this alone. Now, I will ask for some of your time to thank those who were our inspiration and partners; I hope that others will understand if I cannot mention them today.

First and foremost, of course, to our Lord, who, in every moment, guided our country. To my father and mother, [applause] who in fighting abuse and in rendering great sacrifice, became a wellspring of inspiration, not only to our family, but to the entire nation.

To my Cabinet, some of whom I have already mentioned earlier. Now, allow me to continue:

To Executive Secretary Jojo Ochoa, who is also called the Little President: [applause] Our strong relationship began way back, with our parents. We have supported each other through many challenges in life. Your private practice was sacrificed in the length of time that you served the public, first in Quezon City then in my administration. Everything you know about the law, you shared with me. You did not leave me, even in times when there were threats to our lives. Pare, I am lucky that we met, became friends, and became allies in serving our Bosses; [applause]

To Secretary Rene Almendras, ES Ochoa's partner and taskmaster of the Cabinet: Your forehead was once so smooth, now it seems to be riddled with a barangay's humps because you shared the burden of the challenges we faced;

To Secretary Albert del Rosario: [applause] You took your oath on a Friday, by Sunday, you were in Libya to oversee the evacuation of our OFWs whose lives were in danger during the time of the Arab Spring. Motivating you has never been a problem, and if we have ever debated anything, that is because of me doing my best to keep him from traveling to the most dangerous places in the world;

To Secretaries Cesar Purisima and Arsi Balisacan: [applause] a tandem our country is lucky to have: From the big picture to the smallest details, you are the ones who ensure that each Filipino feels the benefits of the growth of our economy; [applause] Of course, some of these achievements could not have been realized without the help of Usec. Cosette Canilao and all those who make up our PPP Center; [Applause]

To Secretary Greg Domingo: our national salesman who enticed businessmen to invest in our country, [applause] and to PEZA Director General Lilia de Lima—I have already tasked the DOST to hurry up and clone her;

To Secretary Babes Singson, the prayer leader of our Cabinet: [applause] who has built concrete evidence of transformation and returned the trust of the Filipino people to the DPWH;

To Secretary Mon Jimenez, [applause] one of our most trusted voices in the Cabinet: It is indeed more fun in the Philippines, and because of your hard work, eight million Filipinos received direct employment; I will also thank his wife, Abby, who helped us put into words and images our agenda of positive change;

To former Energy Secretary Icot Petilla: who continues to make his contributions felt even if he is no longer part of our official family; [applause]

To Secretary Volts Gazmin, who leads our Armed Forces and ensures that we are always prepared for calamities: [applause] Not once did you give us a reason for doubt or fear;

To Secretary Cesar Garcia, our National Security Advisor, who has always been extremely quick to respond to my messages, even if his knee operation had just finished;

To Secretary Janette Garin [applause], who faced MERS, Ebola, food poisoning, encephalitis, and successive threats to our national health: Janette, your strength was the very source of ours;

To Secretary Dinky Soliman, who is on-call 25 hours a day, 8 days a week, [applause] together with all who have been her executive assistants, who, after graduating from DSWD, can be deployed to any crisis in the world: Dinky, every time I call you, you already have the list of the problems that we need to address, current actions being taken, and the measures we still need to take. It takes only one conversation to see that you are on top of the situation; [applause]

To all those who continue to ensure that succeeding generations have the necessary knowledge and skills: Secretaries Armin Luistro, Patti Licuanan, and Joel Villanueva; [applause]

To Secretary Mario Montejo, who did much to bring hope back to PAGASA, and indeed worked hard to make us feel the role of science in national development; [applause]

To Secretaries Procy Alcala and Kiko Pangilinan, who have sown reforms already bearing fruit in the agriculture sector; [applause]

To Secretary Gil de los Reyes, who did not waver in advancing just agrarian reform, however daunting the challenges he faced; [applause]

To Secretaries Ramon Paje, Neric Acosta, and Lucille Sering, whose work showed that inclusive growth is tied to safeguarding our natural resources; [applause]

To Secretary Mar Roxas: whether you are in or out of government, [applause] the enemies of the Straight Path have not stopped criticizing you. Because you count, because your words matter, they have continued to do their best to put you down; [applause] Through their constant attacks on your character, your critics themselves have proven that they are afraid of your integrity, skill, and ability to do the job. It's only because they have nothing to boast of that they're trying to bring you down. Mar, you are proving: You can't put a good man down. [applause] Just as my mother and father had faith, so too should you have faith that our countrymen know who truly puts country before self; [applause]

To Secretary Butch Abad, [applause] who, even though he has received torrents of unfair accusations, continues to ensure that the money of the Filipino people directly benefits the people alone;

To Secretaries Edwin Lacierda and Sonny Coloma, former Secretary Ricky Carandang, together with Usec. Abi Valte and Manolo Quezon, [applause] who were the voices and online presence of the Straight Path: Truly, I felt the burden that you carried in answering questions, whether they made sense or not, to make sure that our countrymen received all the right information;

To Solicitor General Florin Hilbay and Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Ben Caguioa [applause], who have displayed the honesty and integrity fitting of the Executive's foremost attorneys;

To Secretary Ging Deles, as well as Chair Iye Coronel-Ferrer, who have worked tirelessly towards a peaceful Philippines; [applause]

To Secretary Julia Abad, who makes sure that I attend to all my responsibilities: [applause] You are the person I call on to take immediate action, which means that you also often bear the full brunt of my first reaction. Nevertheless, you have always remained cheerful;

To all the other Secretaries who never fail to pick up the phone, even if I call past midnight: Yasmin Busran-Lao, Francis Tolentino, Lu Antonino, Joel Rocamora, Mely Nicolas, Ronald Llamas, Cesar Villanueva, and Manny Mamba; [applause]

To those who may not be official members of the Cabinet, but have nevertheless done their part to help us progress along the Straight and Righteous Path: Governor Say Tetangco, who has deftly managed our Central Bank; Governor Mujiv Hataman of the ARMM [applause]; Chito Cruz of the National Housing Authority [applause]; Gerry Esquivel of the MWSS [applause]; and let me also include Chairman Bong Naguiat of PAGCOR, who was not among those who bought coffee; [laughter and applause]

To former members of the Cabinet who put their skill and competence in full display, especially the late Sec. Jesse Robredo [applause], who remains an inspiration to us all;

To Senate President Frank Drilon and Speaker Sonny Belmonte [applause], who willingly shared their wisdom during the most complex challenges we faced;

To Congressmen Boyet Gonzales and Mel Sarmiento [applause], and to all those who tread the Straight Path with us;

To all the leaders and members of our uniformed services, who protect our Bosses with utmost honor and bravery, and who help ensure security, not just in the Philippines, but also in other parts of the world; [applause]

To all those working in the different branches of government who are rendering true service to their fellow Filipinos;

To the businessmen, the business federations, and all those from the private sector who helped us improve the economy;

To all those in the media who have strived to do their work in the fairest manner possible; [applause]

To all those who have walked alongside us along the Straight and Righteous Path: namely Didi Sytangco, who openly showed her support even during the most difficult of times, as well as Alice Murphy and Yoly Ong, who have served as wellsprings of inspiration and good advice these past few years; [applause]

To Jun Reyes, Gigi Vistan, and everyone who has worked with us since I began running for Congress, until my days in the Senate: Jun and Gigi: you gave me your patient guidance on what to wear, how to act, and how to speak. You know that, unlike my sister Kris, I am not used to being in front of a camera. Even if I kidded that your jobs seemed impossible, you fulfilled them in a professional and reliable manner;

To my spiritual advisers, Father Catalino Arevalo, Sister Agnes Guillen, and Father Jett Villarin [applause], and to Cardinal Chito Tagle, Cardinal Orlando Quevedo, Ka Eduardo Manalo, Bishop Soc Villegas, Bishop Jonel Milan, and Brother Eddie Villanueva; to all those in the religious sector and to those who have prayed for us as we faced major challenges;

To those like Joe America, a blogger who, despite never having met me, wrote: "If the President were in my foxhole, I'd watch his back. That's because I trust that he is watching mine." [applause] I thank you and all our other friends from other shores who have express their unity with our transformation agenda;

To members of the youth like Francesca Santiago, who, at an early age, has displayed love for country;

To Noel Cabangon, and all those in culture and the arts who have used their talents to proclaim our country's transformation; [applause]

To Ate Ballsy, Pinky, Viel, Kris, and my brothers-in-law and nephews and nieces [applause]: You have stood by me since Mom and Dad were in public service. The day is coming when you will no longer have to make additional sacrifices on my behalf;

If I may make a special mention: to General Chito Dizon, former head of the PSG, and to its current head, Raul Ubando, whose first two weeks in charge were a true baptism of fire due to the Zamboanga crisis [applause]; to Lt. Col. Francis Coronel, head of my close-in security, as well as to SPO4 Lito Africano and PO3 Bong Fuyonan, who have been with me for such a long time [applause]; and to the entire Presidential Security Group, which has displayed utmost professionalism in protecting not just me, but President Obama and Pope Francis as well: Don't worry. There are 21 more world leaders arriving for APEC. You have stood by me in times of trial and in times of relief.

Perhaps later, before you sleep, you will ask yourselves why there seems to be so many trials, and so little relief. We are getting there;

To Asec. Susan Reyes, our Social Secretary [applause], who proves that one need not be extravagant to uphold the dignity of the Presidency; to Paul Cabral who makes sure that I always wear proper clothing [applause]; and to Cherry Reyes, who is both my hairstylist [laughter] and an economics practitioner, when it comes to the way she fulfills unlimited wants with very limited resources.

To those working in my Private Office in Malacañang, especially to Usec. Rochelle Ahorro and Asec. Jun Delantar [applause], who have, in many occasions, shared in my stress;

And I would like to introduce to you Yolly Yebes, who has been with me for the past 20 years: You never fail to make sure I am able to eat my meals at the proper time; you prepare my things for all my trips, whether domestic or foreign; and you have cared not just for me, but also for those I work with in government. Whenever I tell you we have a meeting and ask if you could prepare us something to eat, you don't have to ask "when" or "how many people." I never have to worry about those preparations, because you think of everything. Yolly, I wanted you to watch this SONA, so I could tell you: Thank you for all your help; [Applause]

To those who never thought twice about helping repack relief goods in the aftermaths of disasters; to every Filipino who gave what they could and passed around coin banks to help bring about transformation; to those who made their support felt, whether through a text message, a letter, or by expressing it personally; to every child who embraced my leg, looked up, and smiled, every student who has asked to have a selfie with me; and to each person who waded through crowds just to shake my hand;

My Bosses, perhaps my having no family of my own is part of the plan. It has allowed me to focus on our people. In this job, I sometimes feel like a punching bag precariously held together by duct tape, but I have never wavered because you are behind me. It is true: I am not alone. [Applause] This has led me to conclude that my parents continue to watch over me, and that God truly loves us. Thus, to every Filipino who has made this change possible, thank you. It is a great honor being your leader. [Applause]

These expressions of gratitude come with a call: the reforms we have sown along the straight path are already bearing fruit, and will bear an even more bountiful harvest in the future. But this will only happen if we nurture and protect what we have already planted.

Some examples: We cannot just cease to focus on the modernization of the AFP. As for Pantawid Pamilya, once we have helped the bottom twenty percent cross over into the next level, we will need to ensure that they will not return to poverty when they are struck by illness or calamity.

In the area of disaster management: Because of concern for one another, and because of the active cooperation of the LGUs, we were able to ensure that Bohol and Cebu regained their footing after the earthquake. In Zamboanga and Tacloban, we focused straightaway on immediate needs. From delivering food, to making certain that there were no outbreaks of disease; from ensuring that electricity returned quickly, to opening roads; and even to housing and livelihood programs—our government poured and continues to pour all it can to help affected areas. [Applause] Yet there are also things left to be done: There are still communities living in danger zones that must be relocated away from threats to their safety. As regards rebuilding, there is a need to strengthen coordination between the local and national levels, in order to ensure that we finish projects at the soonest possible time.

When it comes to foreign affairs: We did and continue to do everything in our power to be a responsible member of the community of nations; with each measure we take, we ask only for what is just and according to the rule of law. Instead of a solution participated in by just a few, we have advocated that all contribute to the solution of a problem that involves us all. As you know, we are facing a challenge in the West Philippine Sea. We are up against a nation that is far ahead of us,

whether in terms of influence, the economy, or military force. Yet when it comes to reason and love for country, we do not fall behind. As with all other problems, our unity is the key through which we can uphold our rights.

To my Bosses: In all truth, given the challenges that we faced, we could have just put forward band-aid solutions. We could have just handed over a bag of relief goods, or crowded ourselves into photo opportunities. But we all know that in the Philippines, we have a special anger for credit-mongers. What will we do with popularity points if we will just leave problems to succeeding generations? At every opportunity, we sought to identify the correct root of the problem, and implemented a clear and long-term solution to this. Some challenges faced by our country we have overcome; as for the rest, we have begun taking steps towards a permanent solution.

That is the biggest difference. Once, there was only hopelessness. Now, people rely on the government; in fact, they expect, anticipate, and in many cases, want the government to resolve the problems our nation faces in the soonest possible time.

Looking back, with the sheer volume of wrongs we had to correct, we did not just start from zero; we started from the negative—negative in terms of resources to pursue change; negative in terms of opportunities; negative in terms of hope. We filled the gaps; we brought about positive change, and now, our achievements have far surpassed our expectations.

Let us listen to our countrymen who will testify to this transformation:

Translated transcript

In the 25 years that I have worked at PAGASA, I have seen how much of our facilities have improved under the term of our President. Before, PAGASA worked blind. Now, because of the radars and additional observation stations that we have, our capacities to predict the weather have improved. PAGASA is a changed agency. Before, if you said you worked at PAGASA, you were shunned—perhaps because of the quality of the agency's work. But now, because of all the new equipment, our forecasts are very accurate. Today: If you're from PAGASA, you're considered a big shot.

[Applause]

Translated transcript of Testimonial of Congresswoman Kaka Bag-ao

Back then, you could not trust politicians. They promised so much, but could not deliver on any of their commitments.

The leadership brand of President Aquino treats everyone fairly; everyone is important. Services are delivered even to the farthest corners of the country, such as in the Dinagat Islands.

Change is so evident. For instance, in the small towns, which used to be without power, there are now generators. There are also new roads.

We believe so much in this government. If the President were not our leader today, if we did not have an honorable representative in Congress, we wouldn't know what our situation would be.

We are thankful for this brand of good leadership that has served as an inspiration for other public servants. Now, when we say government service, it is service that is seen, felt, and provides an inspiration for people to hope and dream for further success. I now believe my aspirations can be realized: that my dreams are important and nothing is irrelevant.

[Applause]

To our Bosses: If the transformation of our society isn't interrupted, it would indeed be reasonable to say: All we have achieved is only a taste of what is to come. As we have said before: You ain't seen nothing yet. [Applause]

I already mentioned a while ago the SWS survey that was not widely covered in the news: that 8 out of 10 Filipinos believed that the Philippines will become—if not, already is—a developed country in the foreseeable future. This is the opinion of our countrymen. But our economists in NEDA themselves are studying this in a scientific manner, and they have reached the same conclusion.

Let us take a look: From 2010 to 2014, we posted an average GDP growth of 6.2 percent; this is the fastest period of economic growth in the past 40 years. [Applause] If we reach 6.8 percent this 2015, then we will have posted the fastest 6 year average growth period in almost six decades. [Applause] Of course, the growth of our economy means a corresponding growth in government's ability to care for and empower the citizenry to make the most of opportunities being created in the country.

It is clear: If we are not derailed—if we continue along the Straight Path—then we will reach first world status within one generation. If the reforms that have led to our dynamic economic growth continue, then it won't be long before we can stand on equal footing with, if not, surpass, the very countries we admire. [Applause] Did we even think this was possible back in the beginning?

On the other hand, if we return to the crooked path, we will be condemned to waiting for nothing. We will once again be left behind, and the upward trajectory of our economy will reach a premature end.

We have indeed planted impressive reform; and we have already nourished them with intense effort and sacrifice. Who in their right mind would decide to cut the tree down on a whim, when we have only begun harvesting its fruits?

There is a sentiment that I want to share with you; it is best captured in the question: "Will we lose all that we have built—all that we have worked hard for—in one election?" [Applause and laughter] From this perspective, the next election will be a referendum for the Straight and Righteous Path. You will decide whether the transformation we are experiencing today will be permanent, or simply a brief and lucky deviation from a long history of failure.

The question: Are we treading the right path? If your answer is no, then that is akin to saying "I liked it better before, let's just go back to the crooked path." In such a scenario, I will respect your wishes and remain silent.

But if your answer is "yes," then, as always, I am ready to continue supporting you. Even after I step down from office, until my last breath, you can count on me to stand with you, the same way you have stood by me. I will walk alongside you, and with arms linked, we can continue bringing to life the ideals of the Straight and Righteous Path. [Applause]

My bosses, I will admit: I am not perfect. There were times when I was let down by people whom I believed knew how to do their jobs. During moments when those sowing doubt seemed to succeed, perhaps we were unable to share the needed information in a timely and appropriate manner. In these matters, I ask for your understanding.

Nevertheless, I can look anyone in the eye and say: I made the best decisions based on the information and the capacities we possessed at the time. My one and only interest is the well-being of my Bosses. I did all I could to forge a nation that is more just and more progressive—one that enjoys the fruits of meaningful change. [Applause] I will let history decide. As I did during my mother's wake, I will once again speak the words from 2 Timothy, Chapter 4, Verse 7. And I quote, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." [Applause]

My bosses, we began with our country seemingly engulfed in darkness. We were uncertain whether there was even a light at the end of the tunnel. Now, we are being greeted by the dawn of justice and opportunity.

You have all seen the heights we have reached. You have heard the stories of our fellow Filipinos—stories that prove what we can achieve with our own strength, with the help of our countrymen, and with the spirit of cooperation towards the fulfillment of our collective desires. Now, we can hold our heads up high and say to the entire world: “I can. The Filipino can. This is only the beginning.”
[Applause]

Yes: This is only the beginning. This is only the beginning of a country that will not be cowed, and instead will stand as a beacon of justice and resolve in the global community. This is only the beginning of prosperity brought about by freedom from corruption. This is only the beginning of a society where every Filipino who works hard and does the right thing is guaranteed to succeed. This is only the beginning, and now, history poses a challenge to us to continue the transformation, so that it may bring about even more opportunities for future generations.

This is only the beginning. [Applause] We are only in the first chapter of the great story of the Filipino people. Guided by the Almighty, as we continue to tread the Straight Path, we will fulfill even greater aspirations. We will open the doors to even greater progress. Our direction is in your hands.

Good evening and thank you very much.

Reference: <http://www.gov.ph/2015/07/27/english-president-aquino-sixth-sona/>