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Opening Remarks: Climate Diplomacy, Leadership and Negotiations Seminar

12 August 2016 Taal Vista Lodge, Tagaytay, Philippines

Allow me first to extend my warmest appreciation to all of you for coming here despite your busy schedule in your respective countries. I am delighted to welcome you to what we hope will be a very productive and meaningful retreat-seminar of the CVF.

It is not everyday that you get to assemble and discuss matters of great importance while next to an active volcano. From our standpoint, we can relax and enjoy the commanding view of Taal Volcano and the lake as there is no imminent eruption. There is no eruption more imminent than the passion in all of us here today to make a difference in climate action.

It is quite fitting also that a volcano is located here in the province of Cavite, because this province is known to have been a hotbed of the Philippine Independence movement. For over three hundred years, Cavite has been known as the "Historical Capital of the Philippines" and it is recognized as the cradle of the Philippine Revolution. It is in this province where any Asian people first declared independence from colonial rule, when the Philippines declared its independence in June 1898.

Back then, few believed that a ragtag group of revolutionaries would be able to win their freedom against a rich, more advanced, better-armed nation. But like most revolutions, the men and women behind the Philippine Revolution did not consider the odds, for they thought only of the value of their goal—and they were willing to shed blood, sweat, and tears so that they could bequeath to their children and descendants that a nation free from the yoke of tyranny and oppression.

Like them, we, too, are revolutionaries facing daunting odds. Like them, we, too, are fighting for the future -- not only for our own country or for any one people—but for the fate of the entire world and the billions of people who call our planet home.

This is a revolution we in the CVF must lead because we are the countries that will fall first if the 1.5 degrees global warming limit of the Paris Agreement is breached.

To quote the CVF Troika Statement by H.E. Ambassador Elayne Whyte of Costa Rica, “the inclusion of the 1.5°C limit in the Paris Agreement is one of the most important accomplishments. The international agreement we adopted in Paris has the greatest potential for improving the enjoyment of fundamental human rights. Keeping warming to a minimum—to below 1.5 degrees—won’t simply deliver safety and prosperity, it will also deliver justice.”

So while it is true that we scored a victory in Paris, challenges abound and more battles need to be won to realize our shared vision and aspirations for the future.

Winning the war for the survival of our planet entails winning the battles for the hearts and minds of the leaders and policymakers and all other key stakeholders at all levels. It is this ability to win

that we seek in this CVF leadership, diplomacy, and negotiation seminar. capacity-building, experience-sharing exercises.

Assembled with us here are experts who will provide invaluable insights on the themes of diplomacy, leadership and negotiations, as well as climate finance. They are here to arm us with the knowledge necessary to win the battles we fight.

Let us take this opportunity to share our experiences and to learn from one another, just as the Olympians make the most of their opportunities in the Rio Olympics. While the Olympians are in the business of breaking records; we are instead in the business of making certain that the 1.5C record that CVF has set is not broken.

We have to strive to end the record-setting temperature increases we have experienced in the past few years. It is a formidable challenge.

As the Olympians show us, victory does not come easy. It come through perseverance. Similarly, as CVF, we need to do more, to do better and to sustain our gains. And as we shared yesterday, we need to strengthen further our bonds and collaborate more, we need to be more vocal and more visible. It is in this context that we hold this seminar today.

In keeping with the olympic analogies, allow me to say that we are privileged to be passing on the leadership torch to the next Chair of the CVF. Please trust in the Philippines' full support, as we look forward to the activities that will be lined up under your Chairmanship.

To the honourable ministers and secretaries, senior officials, resource persons, expert advisory groups, national panel of experts, civil society organizations, the UNDP, the BMUB/German Environment Ministry, and the GIZ, permit me to extend our gratitude for all the support you have given during our tenure as Chair.

Thank you very much, and more power to all of you.