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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE 63RD FOUNDING
ANNIVERSARY OF THE PHILIPPINE CONSTITUTION ASSOCIATION (PHILCONSA)**

[Delivered at the Ceremonial Hall, Malacañan Palace in Manila | 26 September 2024]

Thank you Speaker Martin Romualdez for your kind introduction. *[Please be seated.]*

Executive Secretary Chief Lucas Bersamin and members of the Cabinet that are here present; distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps; retired Chief Justice Reynato Puno, Chairman of the Philippine Constitution Association and all the other officials of PHILCONSA; of course the welcome would not be complete if I do not greet your newest member, the First Lady *[applause]* Liza Araneta Marcos; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

More than six decades ago, the Philippine Constitution Association or PHILCONSA was founded with a mission to defend, preserve, and protect the Constitution—the fundamental law of our land.

Back then, our democracy was fragile—an infant in the cradle of nationhood—demanding that we build sturdier foundations for governance.

PHILCONSA's role as the “people's conscience”—in the words of Dr. Salvador Araneta—was vital in propagating and preserving it from insidious interests.

It was a bold task that only those who understood the Constitution as a living, breathing embodiment of who we are as Filipinos could fulfill.

In the past sixty-three years, the PHILCONSA has remained the steadfast, vigilant, and uncompromising guardians of our democracy and of our nation.

Despite global uncertainties and geopolitical tensions, the Philippines has remained a bastion of resilience, peace, and stability.

Our response has been neither passive nor reactionary but forward-looking.

Closer to home, rising maritime tensions in the West Philippine Sea have raised fears of greater conflict.

Yet, we continue to assert our sovereignty, and jurisdiction to protect the integrity of our national territory.

We continue to engage in regular consultations and dialogue with all parties to manage that situation in the West Philippine Sea, while developing more avenues for communication and cooperation.

Congress is also working on the passage of several pieces of legislation, including the Maritime Zones Bill, and this clarifies the geographical extent of our maritime domain and the Archipelagic Sea Lanes or ASL Bill that seeks to establish ASLs in our archipelagic waters and in the adjacent territorial sea.

We also continue to commit to our core mission of providing adequate social services, ensuring employment opportunities, and improving the quality of life for all as we achieve prosperity as a nation.

But while our economy flourishes, let us remember the fundamental principle that underpins everything—our Constitution.

The law that establishes the structure of our government, determines the rights of our people, and protects them from abuse.

It promotes our fundamental right to life, liberty, and property. It ensures our right to due process and equal protection, our freedom of speech and religion, our right to privacy, amongst others.

With the three branches of the government, upholding the principle of separation of powers is the key to guarantee that our system of checks and balances remains strong and stable.

It prevents abuse of power, promotes citizen's rights, and ensures accountability amongst the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary.

However, there is much left to be done.

As we stand here today, we must acknowledge that many of the laws that fully bring life to our Constitution remain unpassed, and our efforts to fully empower our people and deepen our democracy still fall short of what the framers envisioned.

It is high time that we take decisive action. The *Bagong Pilipinas* calls upon all the branches of the government to rise to this challenge.

So, as we celebrate today's milestone, let us commit ourselves to the unfinished work of democracy.

Let us breathe life into the principles enshrined in our Constitution.

Let us create a nation where the rule of law reigns supreme, where justice is not selective, and where every Filipino enjoys the freedoms, the rights, and the dignity that they are entitled to.

History is watching us. As we look to the future, let us remember that the Constitution is our guiding light towards a just, prosperous, and resilient Philippines.

Once again, congratulations to the PHILCONSA for its 63 years of dedicated service!

May we all live up to the ideals that you have so fiercely protected.

Thank you, and may God bless us all.

Mabuhay ang ating Saligang Batas!

Mabuhay ang nagkaka-isang Bagong Pilipinas! Maraming salamat at magandang hapon sa inyong lahat. [applause]

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