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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE ORIGINAL MURILLO VELARDE 1734 MAP TO THE PRESIDENT**

[Delivered at the President's Hall, Malacañan Palace in Manila | 06 December 2024]

Your Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps; Retired Associate Justice Antonio Carpio; Chairman Mel Velasco Velarde who has donated the Murillo Velarde 1734 Map to the government. A gift, a gesture of munificence that are – that will be very difficult to equal.

First Lady Louise Araneta Marcos who played a very large part in bringing all of this together - taking the map to the National Museum and formalizing actually the map that really has come to define the Philippines. My fellow workers in government; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

This *Murillo Velarde 1734 Map*—or *Carta Hydro-graphica y Choro-graphica de las Yslas Filipinas*— is widely regarded as the “Mother of All Philippine Maps.”

Beyond its intricate detail and craftsmanship, it is a defining testament to the deep historical roots of our very identity as a nation.

Created by Jesuit cartographer Pedro Murillo Velarde, and brought to life by two Filipinos—Francisco Suarez, an artist, and Nicolás de la Cruz Bagay, who engraved it—the map encapsulates not just the geographical contours of our archipelago but also the vibrant interplay of cultures, of peoples, and traditions that define our nation.

The map features details that go far beyond rivers and coastlines. There are depictions of indigenous Filipinos, *mestizos*, and *Sangleys*; bustling ports and verdant rural landscapes as well. It is as if Murillo Velarde, [Suarez], and Bagay sought to tell the world, “yes, it is a collection of islands. But more than that, this is a nation – a nation that is in the making.”

In 2014, it found its way back home through Mr. Mel Velarde, who is here with us today and who deserves a very large round of applause for what he has done. *[applause]*

At an auction in London, he reclaimed it not as a private collector but as a steward for the nation. Through his generosity, this invaluable piece of history was not locked away in obscurity but it was restored to its rightful owners: to us, the Filipino people.

This historic artifact was among the over 270 maps submitted by the Philippines to the Arbitral Tribunal constituted under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 2013. And these maps were crucial in establishing the Philippines’ entitlement to maritime areas, as reaffirmed in the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea.

The Murillo Velarde Map, in particular, provided critical evidence to demonstrate that the Philippines has continuously exercised authority and jurisdiction over what it is now identified as Panacot Shoal—now Scarborough Shoal—and *Los Bajos de Paragua*—Spratly Islands.

The 2016 Arbitral Award clarified maritime entitlements under UNCLOS, reinforcing our rights over resources within our exclusive economic zone and continental shelf.

Today, we honor a [foundational] document that embodies the truth of our nation's maritime heritage.

This map's significance transcends the time that it has existed.

What began as a map of the Philippines during the Spanish era became a formidable piece of evidence in our assertion of our rightful entitlements in the complex legal arena of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It reminds us that history, when meticulously preserved, wields immense power to inform and to uphold the truth.

The Murillo Velarde Map is an important gift from our past that defined the country's territory, and it is now our duty to carry its legacy forward to future generations.

Let us not only admire the artistry of the masterpiece presented to us today, but also draw inspiration from its enduring message: the call to protect and to assert what is rightfully ours, with resolve and with integrity.

Together, we hold the pen to write the next chapters of our nation's history—chapters that uphold the principles of justice, truth, and unity.

Let us ensure that the legacy of the Murillo Velarde Map continues to guide us in our journey as a nation, steadfast in our identity and resolute in our aspirations.

*Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat!*

*Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! [applause]*

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