**SPEECH BY**

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.**

**AT THE CEREMONIAL SIGNING OF THE GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT (GAA) FOR THE FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2025**

[Delivered at the Ceremonial Hall, Malacañan Palace in Manila | 30 December 2024]

Thank you, Executive Secretary, Chief Luc Bersamin. *[Please be seated.]*

The Senate President, Senate President Chiz Escudero and the honorable members of the Senate; the House Speaker, Speaker Martin Romualdez and the honorable members of the House of Representatives; distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps; Budget and Management Secretary Amenah Pangandaman and the honorable members of the Cabinet; fellow workers in government; ladies and gentlemen; distinguished guests, good morning.

At magandang araw sa inyong lahat at isang mainit na pagtanggap dito sa Malacañan Palace.

As we embrace the holiday season, with the joy of Christmas filling our hearts and the New Year inspiring hope and new possibilities, we are reminded that it is also a time for reflection and for resolve.

Just as families use this time to plan for the year ahead, so too must government dedicate ourselves to fortifying the foundation that we have laid down for a better future for the country.

On this day that we honor our national hero, we enact the 2025 General Appropriations Act. And through this measure the dreams of our heroes are realized by a nation birthed by their sacrifices.

This budget reflects our collective commitment to transforming economic gains into meaningful outcomes for every Filipino. It is designed not just to address our present needs, but to sustain growth and to uplift the lives of generations that are yet to come.

In the first two years of this Administration, we focused on creating the foundation for an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient Philippines. From targeted reforms to strategic investments, we ensured that our progress is felt in the daily lives of every Filipino.

Today, we build on that momentum, guided by the same precision, purpose, and unwavering determination.

In my State of the Nation Address last July, I called for the full cooperation of Congress to approve the budget in their usual timely manner and to adhere to the Administration’s proposed budget as closely as possible.

With the passing of the Fiscal Year 2025 General Appropriations Act, the responsibility of ensuring that every centavo is spent wisely, transparently, and purposely begins.

Cognizant that our resources are finite and our people’s needs are plenty, we need to carefully curate the particulars of the budget.

So much so that even grand ambitions and great plans must be tempered. We must exercise maximum prudence otherwise, we run the risk of increasing our deficit and debt and derailing our development agenda for our country.

While the final version of the budget reflects many of our shared priorities, some provisions required careful scrutiny.

The Filipino people have spoken: every centavo must go to programs that truly uplift lives, strengthen communities, secure the future development of the Philippines.

There were calls to veto the entire budget and to revert to a reenacted one. However, this is not an option that we can afford. A reenacted budget will set us back, delay our vital programs,  jeopardize targets for economic growth, including our goals of achieving single-digit poverty levels, and upper-middle-income status.

However, the Executive Branch is one with the people in raising concerns over appropriations that are not consistent with the country’s development plan and responsive to the needs of the people. After all, it is our people whom we serve.

We take our role as stewards of our taxpayers’ money seriously. And for this reason, after an exhaustive and thorough review, we have directly vetoed over 194 billion worth of the line items that are not consistent with our programmed priorities. These include allocations for certain programs and projects of the Department of Public Works and Highways, and those under the Unprogrammed Appropriations, which increased by 300 percent.

We shall also pursue Conditional Implementation on certain items to ensure that the people’s funds are utilized in accordance with their authorized and stated purpose.

Specifically, to ensure that government assistance is not merely a provisional solution to a persistent issue, we are compelled to subject the implementation of the Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program or AKAP to the convergence efforts of the DSWD, DOLE, and NEDA. This way we ensure that its implementation will be strategic leading to the long-term improvement of the lives of qualified beneficiaries, while guarding against misuse, and duplication, and fragmented benefits.

This approach is anchored on a simple yet profound truth: the appropriation of public funds must not break the public trust.

In the exercise of our budget execution function and our duty to ensure prudent fiscal management, we ensure that all increases in appropriations and new budgetary items shall now be subject to cash programming; applicable budget execution rules; and vetting and approval of the concerned offices. This way we guarantee that these programs and projects are implementable and will redound to the benefit of our people.

Sa Sambayanang Pilipino, nakikinig po kami sa inyo. Salamat po sa inyong pagkilatis sa ating National Budget at sa pagpuna sa kaibahan ng isinumite ng Kongreso sa President’s proposed budget. Kaya naman po kahit Pasko, kaming lahat ay nagtrabaho upang pag-aralan ito.

Ito pong ipapasang General Appropriations Act ngayon, kasama na ang mga veto, ay resulta ng aming pagdinig sa inyong tugon. Makakaasa naman po kayo na sa budget na ito, ipagpapatuloy at papalawigin pa natin ang ating serbisyo sa inyo, alinsunod sa ating Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028.

Titiyakin namin na mananatiling prayoridad ang Social Services, kasama na rin diyan ang Edukasyon, ayon sa mandato ng ating Saligang Batas, pati na rin ang Kalusugan. Sisikapin din po natin na ipagpatuloy at ipagpapatupad ang ating Economic Services, kasama ang imprastraktura at agrikultura, upang mapalakas pa ang ating ekonomiya at malabanan ang kahirapan na dulot ng pagtaas ng presyo ng bilihin at kalamidad.

Titiyakin namin na maipapatupad ang mga plano upang mapababa ang presyo ng pagkain lalong-lalo na ang bigas.*[applause]* Itutuloy namin ang mga hakbangin upang mapunan ang kakulangan sa mga gusaling pampaaralan at ang mga computer ng mga eskwelahan. Sisiguruhin natin na tuloy-tuloy at mas lalawig pa ang mga benepisyo ng lahat ng Pilipino sa ilalim ng PhilHealth.

Through this budget, we will also prioritize green investments, and disaster preparedness to safeguard our environment and ensure resilience against disasters. We shall drive innovation and enhance trade and investments to create more quality jobs and to improve productivity.

To sustain these efforts, we are advancing governance reforms. We shall continue to improve our systems for a more efficient, transparent, and accountable government. Through digitalization we shall streamline services, reduce bureaucratic delays, and combat corruption.

Sa aking mga kasamahan sa pamahalaan, nais kong ipaalala ang ating tungkulin sa bayan. Gamitin natin nang wasto ang pondo ng ating bayan. Siguruhin natin na agarang masimulan ang mga proyektong napopondohan at matapos ito nang naaayon sa programa at pondong inilaan dito.

So as we close this year and step into a new chapter, let us remind ourselves of our shared responsibility.

Nation-building is not the work of government alone—it is a partnership that we make with every single Filipino. With unity, with determination, and a clear vision, we can achieve a future where progress is felt in every home, in every community, every corner of this archipelago.

Together, let us build a Bagong Pilipinas—a nation of genuine and shared prosperity.

Maraming, maraming salamat sa inyong lahat. At siguro maaari pa ring bumati ng Maligayang Pasko at masaganang Bagong Taon!

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat at magandang umaga sa inyo. *[applause]*

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