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**KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF
PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
FOR THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION OF THE LIBERATION OF MANILA**

[Delivered at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial in Taguig City | 22 February 2025]

Thank you to our Foreign Affairs Secretary, Secretary Ricky Manalo.

The U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Her Excellency MaryKay Carlson and the esteemed members of the Diplomatic Corps; National Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. and the honorable members of the Cabinet; American Battle Monument Commission Secretary Charles Djou; INDOPACOM Commander Admiral Samuel Paparo; Our gallant heroes, the World War II veterans who are here with us today; Fellow workers in government; Distinguished guests; Ladies and gentlemen;

Good afternoon.

It is with profound honor and gratitude that I join you all today in the commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Manila.

I wish to thank the U.S. Embassy for bringing us all together and in organizing today's program.

The City of Manila, a bustling and modern metropolis known as the *Pearl of the Orient*, capitulated to the Japanese forces in early 1942 pushing the American forces to eventually surrender the Philippines to Japanese control.

In the next three years, with the Americans gone, guerilla forces all throughout the archipelago would continue to fight with resolve and often make the ultimate sacrifice with the goal of securing freedom for our motherland.

Manila would be free again three years later, but at a significant cost. It would take almost a month of fierce urban combat, over 1,000 U.S. servicemen killed, more than 100,000 Filipino civilian lives lost for Manila to finally be free. Many of those who fought for Manila's freedom were eventually interred in these hallowed grounds. In the end, Manila would be free but unrecognizable.

As the most devastated city in the Pacific, it could be easy for many of us to forget about the death and destruction in Manila at this difficult time in our history. Yet, we are all here this afternoon, 80 years

since the liberation of Manila and the end of the second World War, honoring our veterans, all those who stood firm for democracy and for humanity.

I would like to believe that even if we gather to commemorate the liberation of Manila, year after year, as our predecessors before us, our deep respect has not faded nor will it ever fade; our deepest respect for the soldiers who suffered.

For the soldiers who lost their lives as they marched more than 60 miles from Bataan to Tarlac during the infamous *Death March*.

For the thousands who never saw the light at the end of the tunnels in Corregidor.

For those whose lives and families were changed forever by war.

And of course, our deepest respect for the veterans who are here today – veterans who come regularly and whose numbers have dwindled over the years.

On behalf of a grateful nation, I wish to recognize the veterans present here today and their families. We are privileged to not have to see what you had seen, to not have ingrained in our memories what you had to go through. May we continue to deserve living and thriving in this world that you have built for us.

Filipinos paid the highest price for democracy to be preserved and for democracy to flourish. Standing on this hallowed ground, we are reminded of our solemn duty to always do what is necessary to ensure that we bequeath a sovereign and proud country to future generations.

The Philippines, deeply familiar with the atrocities brought about by war between and among nations, has always chosen the path of peace, and I can assure all of you that we will continue to do so.

Through diplomacy, dialogue, and cooperation, we have successfully maintained a region that is peaceful, stable, and prosperous.

We have and will continue to work with partners and the international community in building bridges, forging solutions, preserving our global commons.

The Philippines will always make a stand and will always stand for what is right.

In a world where the only thing that appears to be constant is change, we are thus gratified by our enduring alliance, our partnership, and friendship with the United States, especially towards advancing our common agenda of peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

In peace and in war, through natural disasters and pandemics, Philippine-U.S. relations are firmly anchored on the values and principles that we cherish – peace, democracy, fairness, social progress, and justice.

Our two nations are committed to the preservation and enhancement of national security, the attainment of economic prosperity, and the promotion of the rights and wellbeing of our peoples.

Whether we gather, as we do today, to remember the liberation of Manila some eighty years ago, or during joint military exercises as our armed forces will in a few weeks' time for *Balikatan*, there is no doubt that our relationship is robust, with our two countries continuing to work together to address common challenges.

Let me end by noting that the *Battle of Manila* offers a lot of lessons and represents a great many opportunities. I am pleased to see many of the embassies joining us in this important event.

I am sure that you will gain a better understanding of our country and our people in learning about our past.

We are proud of our history and even prouder of the relationships and alliances that we have built over the many years.

Bound by our shared history and our common commitment to a region governed by rules not by might, where the rights of countries, large or small, are respected, the Philippines recognizes challenges that lie ahead and is assured that we can continue to count on the help of friends, as we have done so over the last eighty years.

It is truly an honor to stand with all of you today. Thank you for making the spirit of 1945, and the sacrifices of our forebears, alive in our hearts today.

As you later on leave these hallowed grounds, may I invite all of you to pause for a few moments of quiet remembrance for those who fought for our freedoms, for our democracy, our posterity. A few moments to remember, to honor, and to thank.

May the light of their sacrifice, their nationalism, their love of country forever scatter the shadows of war, tyranny, and oppression.

Thank you. *Mabuhay po tayong lahat.*

Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! [applause]

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