

**SPEECH OF SENATOR GREGORIO B. HONASAN II, PRESIDENT,  
GPH-ASIA BEFORE THE 6<sup>TH</sup> FORUM OF THE GLOBAL  
PARLIAMENTARIANS ON HABITAT (GPH), CAMARA  
MUNICIPAL, RIO DE JANEIRO, MARCH 19, 2010**

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**HON. PETER GOETZ, PRESIDENT OF THE GLOBAL  
PARLIAMENTARIANS ON HABITAT (GPH)**

**HON. OSCAR LOPEZ VELARDE, CHAIRMAN, ADVISORY  
COUNCIL OF THE GPH**

**HON. ELOY CANTU SEGOVIA, PRESIDENT OF GPH-AMERICA**

**HON. ELIOMAR COELHO, VICE PRESIDENT FOR GPH-  
AMERICA**

**HON. NICK YOU, SENIOR ADVISER, POLICY AND STRATEGIC  
PLANNING, UNITED NATIONS HABITAT**

**DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES**

**FRIENDS**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

**GOOD MORNING.**

**FIRST, PLEASE ALLOW THIS HUMBLE REPRESENTATION A  
BRIEF INTRODUCTION. I AM GREGORIO B. HONASAN II,  
SENATOR FROM THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES AND  
NOW SERVING MY THIRD TERM. SENATOR RODOLFO G.**

**BIAZON, MY PREDECESSOR AS PRESIDENT OF THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL (ARC) OF THE GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR HABITAT (GPH), REQUESTED ME TO FLY TO THIS BEAUTIFUL CITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO TO ATTEND THIS IMPORTANT CONFERENCE. AS FORMER CHAIRMAN OF OUR SENATE COMMITTEE ON URBAN PLANNING, HOUSING AND RESETTLEMENT, I PLACE A PREMIUM ON HOUSING AND HABITAT ISSUES.**

**AS APPOINTED ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL, I AM HONORED TO BE NOW PART OF THE GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR HABITAT WHICH IS VERY DISTINCT. IT IS THE ONLY WORLD ORGANIZATION OF PARLIAMENTARIANS DEVOTED TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE AND SUSTAINABLE SHELTER FOR ALL. I COMMIT MYSELF FULLY TO THIS NOBLE ENDEAVOR TO PROVIDE EACH MAN A DECENT HOME AND A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY.**

**THE PHILIPPINE CONGRESS ORGANIZED THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL IN YEAR 2000 WHEN IT HOSTED THE THIRD CONFERENCE OF THE GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR HABITAT IN MANILA. TWO YEARS LATER, IN 2002, WE CONVENED THE FIRST ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL FORUM IN MANILA WHERE WE RE-AFFIRMED OUR COMMITMENT TO THE UNITED NATIONS AGENDA AND THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR HABITAT**

**IN ACHIEVING THE TARGETS SET IN THE UNITED NATIONS' MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS.**

**SINCE THEN, MANY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHICH ARE MEMBERS OF OUR COUNCIL, TOGETHER WITH MORE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, HAVE FACED SERIOUS GLOBAL CHALLENGES. THE RECENT ONSLAUGHT OF NATURAL CATASTROPHIES, AGGRAVATED BY THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC PROBLEMS HAVE GIVEN US STRONG MOTIVATION AND OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK CLOSER TOGETHER IN VARIOUS WORLD ORGANIZATIONS WHICH INCLUDE THE UNITED NATIONS, THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION AND IN REGIONAL INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ORGANIZATIONS.**

**IN SEPTEMBER OF 2008, TROPICAL STORM KETSANA STRUCK THE PHILIPPINES, INFLECTING IN ONE DAY WHAT IS NORMALLY ONE MONTH'S RAINFALL ON MANILA AND THE SURROUNDING PROVINCES. THE STORM LEFT 80 PERCENT OF THE CITY UNDER WATER. IT WAS THE WORST TO HIT MANILA IN FORTY YEARS. A FEW DAYS LATER, EARTHQUAKES ROCKED INDIA AND INDONESIA WHILE A TSUNAMI STRUCK AMERICAN SAMOA. THE OUTPOURING OF INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE PHILIPPINES AND THE OTHER CALMITY-STRICKEN COUNTRIES WAS OVERWHELMING. WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO THE COUNTRIES WHOSE QUICK RESPONSE HELPED REBUILD SHATTERED LIVES AND DREAMS.**

**WE IN THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT THE ISSUE ON CLIMATE CHANGE IS PRIORITY IN THIS YEAR'S GPH FORUM. AS MANY OF US, INCLUDING THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA ARE ARCHIPELAGOS, THE PREDICTED GLOBAL AVERAGE SEA LEVEL RISE OF 9 TO 88 CENTIMETERS BY THE YEAR 2100 AS A RESULT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IS ALARMING . IF WE DO NOT PREPARE, ENTIRE ISLANDS AND COASTAL COMMUNITIES WILL BE SUBMERGED, EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE WILL BE LOST AND MILLIONS OF INHABITANTS DISPLACED. AT PRESENT, WE IN ASIA, ARE EXPERIENCING SEVERE DROUGHTS AND HEAT WAVES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE EL NINO PHENOMENON RESULTING IN SEVERE DAMAGE TO CROPS WHICH ARE ABOUT TO BE HARVESTED, INEVITABLY LEADING TO FOOD SHORTAGE AND SEVERELY REDUCED PRODUCTIVITY.**

**WHILE WE LOOK UP TO OUR MOTHER ORGANIZATION, THE GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR HABITAT, TO HELP US PLAN AND REDUCE THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON SHELTER AND HABITAT, IT IS MORE IMPERATIVE THAT WE IN THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL TRY TO HELP OURSELVES. WE CAN ALSO REMIND OURSELVES OF COMMITMENTS MADE IN THE FIRST ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL FORUM 8 YEARS AGO IN MANILA.**

**THE PHILIPPINES BECAUSE OF ITS OVERDUE TENURE AS CHAIR OF THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL, CALLED FOR ELECTIONS OF THE COUNCIL'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS, FIRST IN 5<sup>TH</sup> GPH FORUM IN RABAT, MOROCCO IN NOVEMBER 2005, THEN IN NOVEMBER 2008 ON THE OCCASION OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> WORLD URBAN FORUM IN NANJING, CHINA. HOWEVER, WE FAILED TO MUSTER THE NECESSARY QUORUM TO HOLD ELECTIONS. THIS BRINGS TO MIND WHAT THE HONORABLE JERKO ROSIN, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF CROATIA SAID, DURING THE GPH PARLIAMENTARY MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 6, 2009 IN THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, D.C., THAT MANY COUNTRIES ARE NOT YET INTERESTED. WE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE GPH AND TO ATTRACT MORE COLLEAGUES TO THE ISSUES OF HABITAT. INCIDENTALLY, IN BEHALF OF THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL, PLEASE ALLOW ME TO THANK MR. ROSIN FOR HIS EFFORTS IN LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR HOSTING OF THE 7<sup>TH</sup> GPH FORUM IN ZADAR, CROATIA IN 2011.**

**TO BREAK THE LONG-STANDING NEED TO CHANGE THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL, SENATOR RODOLFO G. BIAZON, IN HIS INVITATION FOR THE 6<sup>TH</sup> GPH ADDRESSED TO HEADS OF PARLIAMENTS OF ALL 38 COUNCIL MEMBERS, CLEARLY STATED THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF A QUORUM OF 12 COUNTRIES, ELECTIONS WILL STILL BE HELD AND OFFICERS OF THE BOARD SHALL BE**

**CHOSEN FROM THOSE MEMBER-COUNTRIES PRESENT. AS THERE WAS NO OBJECTION RECEIVED, I , AS APPOINTED ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE ARC-GPH, CONVENED THE COUNCIL'S MEETING YESTERDAY, MARCH 18, HERE IN THE CAMARA MUNICIPAL BUT ONLY THE DELEGATION FROM MALAYSIA HEADED BY HONORABLE SIDARTO WAS ABLE TO ATTEND. OUR GOOD PRESIDENT, HON. PETER GOETZ GRACIOUSLY ATTENDED OUR MEETING AND ENCOURAGED THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL TO REVITALIZE ITSELF AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE GPH FAMILY. DURING THE MEETING, WE PROPOSED THAT THE PHILIPPINES CONTINUE ITS TEMPORARY CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL UNTIL SUCH TIME THAT AN ELECTION IS HELD IN THE 7<sup>TH</sup> GPH IN ZADAR, CROATIA IN 2011. THIS PROPOSAL WAS APPROVED BY THOSE PRESENT. OUR FRIENDS FROM INDONESIA ALSO PROPOSED THAT THERE IS A NEED TO AMEND THE RULES OF THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL AS FAR AS QUORUM IS CONCERNED SO AS TO AVOID WHAT SEEMS TO BE MANY UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO ELECT A NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS. WE ALSO REALIZED THE COMPELLING NEED TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AMONG OUR 38 MEMBER-COUNTRIES SO AS TO MAKE THE WORK OF THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL A CONTINUING PROCESS WHICH DOES NOT BEGIN AND END IN EACH GPH MEETING. ONE YEAR OF PREPARATIONS FOR THE 7<sup>TH</sup> GPH IS ADEQUATE TO SET IN MOTION THIS COMMUNICATION COMPONENT OF THE COUNCIL WHICH**

**FOR ME IS THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL FOR ANY ORGANIZATION TO SUCCEED ESPECIALLY IN THE EXCHANGE AND SHARING OF CRITICAL INFORMATION. I AM VERY OPTIMISTIC THAT THIS CONDITION IN OUR COUNCIL VERY TEMPORARY IN NATURE.**

**FOR OUR PART, THE PHILIPPINES SHALL CONTINUE WORKING TOWARDS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF THE GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR HABITAT, FOREMOST OF WHICH IS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SHELTER THRU EFFECTIVE LAWS. THE PHILIPPINE CONGRESS HAS IN PLACE SEVERAL LAWS ON HABITAT AND SHELTER. THESE INCLUDE AMENDMENTS TO THE RENT CONTROL LAW AND THE NATIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM, DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION AND LAND USE MAPPING, INVENTORY AND PLANNING. WE SHALL SHARE INFORMATION ON THESE LAWS WITH OTHER PARLIAMENTS.**

**AGAIN PLEASE ALLOW ME TO QUOTE MY PREDECESSOR, SENATOR RODOLFO G. BIAZON WHO HAS GIVEN HIS BEST – BOTH TIME AND EFFORT – TO THE ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL AND THE GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR HABITAT. IN THE 3<sup>RD</sup> GPH IN MANILA, HE SAID “OUR WORLD HAS REACHED THE CROSSROADS OF MEANINGLESS EXISTENCE AND LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY. IT IS TIME THAT WE CHOOSE WHICH AVENUE TO TAKE. AND IF WE SHOULD TAKE THE PATH THAT WOULD TAKE US TOWARD**

**SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUALITY, WE SHOULD STRIVE HARD SO THAT OUR WORLD MAY NOT FALL BACK INTO THE TRAP OF COMPLACENCY AND APATHY AGAIN.”**

**I WOULD LIKE TO END BY SAYING THAT IN A WORLD THAT HAS BECOME A GLOBALIZED VILLAGE, COOPERATION AMONG ALL COUNTRIES IS INDISPENSABLE IF WE ARE TO SAVE HUMANITY FROM DESTRUCTION. WE MUST ALL WORK HARD TO OFFER OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN A MOTHER EARTH THAT IS AS HABITABLE, AS SAFE, AS CLEAN AND AS BEAUTIFUL AS WE ALL DREAM SHE SHOULD BE.**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND KIND ATTENTION.**