

Remarks of Philippine Ambassador Leslie J. Baja
Reception for the 125th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence
14 June 2023

Dear Minister, Excellencies, friends, ladies and gentlemen, *mga kababayan*, good evening and welcome to this celebration marking the 125th anniversary of the proclamation of Philippine Independence.

Tonight, we bring Philippine culture to Morocco – culture represented by two wonderful singers who call themselves “The Nightingales” and who will render to us beautiful music from the Philippines and the world. It is a fitting name and occasion as a nightingale is a migratory bird known for its melodious sound often heard at night.

Earlier, we also opened an exhibit of beautiful photographs of Moroccan photographer Mohammed Tazi who has fallen for the scenery and landscape that the Philippines has to offer. We hope that the alluring beauty of his photographs will see more of you visiting the Philippines soon. Merci, Mohammed!

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, It is said that “culture increasingly permeates international relations and foreign policies.” For us in the Philippines, cultural diplomacy is a soft power we utilize to strengthen relations and foster mutual understanding with our friends and partners, in this case with Morocco. “In a globalized, interconnected world where countries are increasingly interdependent, cultural diplomacy can be critical to fostering peace and stability. By supporting mutual understanding, trust and exposure to cultural diversity, it enhances international relations in many areas of cooperation.” Intercultural cooperation and Interfaith dialogue can enhance cooperation in an increasingly competitive environment, fostering shared values and in the process winning hearts and minds.

We are fortunate to be in Morocco which has a tolerant yet traditional culture with strong values. It has always been an outstanding model of cultural coexistence and interaction between religions. The Filipinos in Morocco can attest to that. Just like the Philippines, Morocco represents and is shaped by a convergence of influences throughout history.

In two years time, both our countries will celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations. More than the start of golden era, it is hoped that our relations will be more vibrant and diverse partnership, with a greater understanding of each other’s role in the community of nations.

As we celebrate tonight, let us also remember that our independence and freedom can easily be lost. We should remain vigilant and stand together in a world rocked with instability, war and aggression, civil strife and terrorism, hunger and environmental problems. Let our interdependence cultivate a culture of peace, understanding and

tolerance amongst ourselves, otherwise the sacrifices of our heroes and martyrs of independence would have been in vain.

Dear Minister, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for coming tonight, to view the exhibit and to watch this concert. Special thanks to the Bibliotheque Nationale for accommodating us in this lovely auditorium tonight and to my Embassy colleagues for their hard work in making all these possible. I wish you all a pleasant evening.

Marami pong salamat!