

Opening and welcome remarks

Dear fellow kasimanwas of Iloilo

Welcome to this special gathering today. We are all here because of love and pride for a special place, our province and our city of Iloilo.

The Iloilo Economic Development Foundation has been tireless in its advocacy to promote Iloilo as an ideal investment destination. And why not, when there is really so much going for it – a beautiful airport to arrive into, wide concrete highways to move around in, new gleaming business districts, a convention center, open spaces that can transform into industrial and economic facilities, abundant talent, very livable cities, peaceful towns offering countless business opportunities, dedicated and honest public servants who are eager to service investor requirements efficiently...the list is long.

I am a recent participant in the economic boomtown that is Iloilo. Retiring from 30+ years of employment in a multinational firm in Manila, I chose to make Iloilo my next “habitat”.

Together with non-Ilonggo business colleagues, we have started up a business based in Concepcion, Iloilo. Last week, we began commercial operations, after almost a year of setting up the company, obtaining permits, buying equipment, hiring people, and installing the plant. The experience has been most satisfying. My non-Ilonggo partners are simply delighted to have chosen to invest in Iloilo. I myself am impressed – this is not the Iloilo I remember from my youth!

Recent events have put Iloilo in the spotlight. They unfortunately threaten to derail the progress that has been made. As peace-loving as we Ilonggos are, we must ensure that we do what we can to stay on track. We need to reaffirm our pride in Iloilo, and to declare that Iloilo is as ready as ever to take its place among the most liveable and business-friendly locations in the world.

This is the spirit behind the campaign we are launching today: Proud to be Ilonggo.

We are reaping the benefits of this positive business climate today because people, both in the public and private sectors – have worked hard to address issues and iron out problems. You who are present here today must surely have contributed in one way or another to this outcome. Thank you all for making me proud to be Ilonggo.