

MESSAGE

by

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World Oceans Day
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The Philippines joins in the celebration of World Oceans Day. This year's theme, "The Ocean: Life and Livelihoods," aptly describes the Philippines' relationship with the oceans.

We are an archipelago and a coastal state. Surrounded by waters which weave between our 7,600 islands, our fate as a nation and people hangs on how we value and take care of our vast marine resources; protecting them from depredations by ourselves and others.

From the oceans came life; to the oceans humanity has turned for life and livelihood. But its resources are not limitless. It is vulnerable to overexploitation, climate change by human heedlessness and recklessness and declining biodiversity from human greed. Marine plastic pollution is a growing concern.

Our challenge is adopting a sustainable approach for its use, management and conservation. Here, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea wisely tells us: "The problems of ocean space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a

whole.” Better yet, my President, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, has told visiting foreign leaders, that a country cannot own any of the seas, to the exclusion of others; least of all because an accident of history gave its name to them. If that were true, we’d own and keep others away from seas named after my country or part of its geography. But the seas belong to everyone to share and use peacefully and responsibly. The waters that set us apart yet bind us together are the heritage of humanity.

Ocean sustainability ensures livelihoods. It gives us a growth-oriented economic framework that assures use of resources in a competitive and ecologically-balanced manner.

As we celebrate World Oceans Day, the Philippines affirms its commitment to SDG 14. We will continue to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Thank you.