

The following excerpts are from the speech by Singapore President S R Nathan at the State Banquet hosted in honour of His Excellency Benigno S Aquino III, President of the Republic of the Philippines, at the Istana, Singapore, 10 March 2011, 7.30pm:

Your Excellency, President Benigno Aquino

Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I welcome Your Excellency on your first State Visit to Singapore. In 1986, we had the honour of hosting your mother, the late President Corazon Aquino, when she made her State Visit to Singapore.

Your Excellency

Singapore and the Philippines share strong common interests in promoting regionalism. As maritime countries our links have historically been with the seas around us. We naturally share common interests in the freedom of navigation and safety at sea. As founding members of ASEAN, we also share the same interest to keep ASEAN cohesive, strong and relevant as we head towards the establishment of the ASEAN Community by 2015.

With the worst of the 2008 global financial crisis behind us, our region is well poised for growth. We must be focused on our common goal of achieving an ASEAN Community. The ASEAN Connectivity Master Plan is an innovative idea that seeks to enhance physical, institutional, and people-to-people connectivity in ASEAN. I look forward to working with you to strengthen our ASEAN links with the globalised international economy.

As Your Excellency aptly pointed out in your speech to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York in September last year, and I quote "From a small grouping of 10 nations, ASEAN has now emerged as the nucleus of regional dialogue and cooperation". It is my hope that the Philippines and Singapore could, with your visit, work in even closer partnership to deepen regional cooperation in this globalised world. Let us continue with our strong partnership to preserve the centrality and relevance of ASEAN in the evolving regional architecture in Asia.

Your Excellency

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

May I now invite you to rise and join me in a toast to:

- the good health and success of President Benigno Aquino;
- the peace, progress and prosperity of the Philippines; and
- to the enduring friendship between the Philippines and Singapore.

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