

---

**THE USE OF SPANISH LANGUAGE  
IN THE PHILIPPINE CURRENT DIPLOMACY**

---

CONRADO M. LANCION, JR.  
Former senior speechwriter and presidential staff director  
Office of the President of the Philippines  
Malacañang Palace

ISAAC DONOSO JIMÉNEZ  
University of Alicante

## I. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,107 islands off the southeast coast of the Asian mainland<sup>1</sup>. Spanning 1,854 kilometers from north to south and 1,110 kilometers from east to west, it has a total land area of 300,000 sq.km. It is bounded on the north by the Bashi Channel, on the east by the Pacific Ocean, on the west by the South China Sea, and on the south by Sulu Sea and Celebes Sea. The archipelago is divided into three major island groups: Luzon, the largest island, in the north; Visayas, a cluster of smaller islands including Samar, the third largest island, in the middle; and Mindanao, the second largest island, in the south.

Many of the islands are of volcanic origin. The Philippines has more than 200 volcanoes, although only 21 of these are active. When Mount Pinatubo, dormant for 600 years, erupted in 1991, it cooled the weather around the globe. Numerous fault lines crisscross the archipelago, making it one of the most earthquake-prone countries in the world. The country is also visited by an average of 20 typhoons a year.

The Philippines, however, is rich in biodiversity and is blessed with majestic mountain peaks, white sand beaches, lush green countryside, and a generally warm climate. The country has only two pronounced seasons – dry and wet.

### 1. HISTORY

It is widely believed that the Philippine archipelago was once connected to the Asian mainland, as evidenced by the similarity between the flora and fauna of Borneo and Palawan and fossils of elephants found in Luzon. The Negritos were said to have crossed this land bridge in coming to the country, though subsequent waves of migration came by sea.

As the early inhabitants spread and settled in the river deltas all over the islands, they engaged in barter trade with merchants from China and other neighboring countries. Legend has it that ten Bornean datus landed in Panay during the 13<sup>th</sup> century and purchased the island from the natives.

The traders and proselytizers from Malaysia and Indonesia brought Islam to the Philippines. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Islam had been established in the Sulu Archipelago and spread from there to other parts of Mindanao and the Manila area.

The Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan “discovered” the Philippines in 1521. He befriended the ruler of Cebu, Rajah Humabon, and converted his family and 700 others to Christianity. He was later killed in the Battle of Mactan by Humabon’s rival chieftain, Lapulapu.

Despite this setback, subsequent Spanish expeditions succeeded in subduing much of the country.

Spanish rule brought political unification to the previously independent islands and communities that formed the Philippines, or *Filipinas*, that was derived from the name of Phillip II, the then-King of Spain. The seat of government was first established in Cebu and later moved to Manila in 1571.

---

<sup>1</sup> For further details see Conrado M. Lancion, Jr., *Fast Facts about Philippine Provinces*, Manila, Tahanan Books, 1995.

Spanish colonization lasted from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or 333 years. It introduced Christianity and other elements of western civilization, such as the code of law, printing and the calendar.

The Philippine Revolution against Spain broke out in 1896, and its leaders proclaimed independence two years later, on June 12, 1898. This government was short-lived because, as a result of the Spanish-American War, Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States in the Treaty of Paris in December of the same year. The U.S. occupation of the Philippines led to the outbreak of the Philippine-American War but the superior might of the new colonizers prevailed.

The Americans established a military government in 1898 and a civil government in 1901. They ruled the Philippines for the next 40 years, introduced popular education, and prepared the Filipinos for democracy. The Commonwealth of the Philippines, under Filipino President Manuel L. Quezon, was established in 1935.

The Second World War brought on the Japanese occupation of the Philippines and the exile of the Commonwealth government to America. A puppet Republic was established in the country in 1943. A year later, General Douglas MacArthur returned and liberated the Philippines.

The country regained its independence from America on July 4, 1946, but was placed under martial law by Ferdinand Marcos 26 years later. "People Power" restored freedom to the Filipinos in the EDSA Revolution of 1986.

The Philippines held a grand celebration of the centennial of its independence in 1998. The nation, once dubbed "the sick man of Asia," had by then become a tiger economy under President Fidel V. Ramos. Despite the financial crisis that swept Asia in the closing years of the century, President Joseph Estrada's administration managed to steer the country out of it and head towards recovery.

Another EDSA Revolution in 2001, however, led to the downfall of President Estrada and he was succeeded by his vice-president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. President Arroyo, in a bid to further strengthen the economy, has pledged to make the Philippines a developed country by 2020. Her administration, though, has been hounded by allegations of election rigging and corruption.

## 2. THE PEOPLE

Filipinos consist of various Malayo-Polynesian-speaking ethnic groups but centuries of colonization have influenced both their appearance and culture.

The Spaniards converted the majority of the people to Christianity. The Americans changed the basic language of government, schools, and business. Today, the Philippines is regarded as the only Christian, English-speaking nation in Asia.

Those who were not colonized or resisted such efforts, such as the Muslims of southern Mindanao, managed to preserve their traditions, customs, and beliefs but they were marginalized in the development process. The descendants of the aborigines suffered a more tragic fate: they were driven from their coastal settlements to the hinterlands, first by the foreign invaders, then by their land-grabbing countrymen.

Filipinos are divided geographically and culturally into regions and ethnic groups. Filipino, based largely on Tagalog, and English are the official languages but more than 90 languages and dialects are spoken throughout the archipelago.

The Philippines has a population of over 90 million as of 2008. There are more than 11 million overseas Filipinos worldwide.

## 3. GOVERNMENT

The Philippines has a presidential, unitary form of government where the President is both head of state and head of government, as well as commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

The capital is Manila, which is the seat of the national government and the center of education, commerce and industry, culture, and the arts. It is the eleventh most populous metropolitan area in the world.

The country is divided into 17 regions, 81 provinces, 136 cities, 1,494 municipalities and 41,995 barangays. Both the city and the municipality are composed of barangays. A province is composed of municipalities, but may or may not have cities.

When Spain ruled the Philippines, all its land was said to belong to the king. The governor-generals in the colony, however, distributed *encomiendas* (land grants) to Spanish soldiers, settlers, and religious orders. The *encomienda* was a community of Filipinos placed under a Spanish *encomendero*. In return for looking after the welfare of the people who lived on the land, an *encomendero* collected tributes from them for the government.

The abuses committed by the *encomenderos* against their tenants led to the establishment of the *provincia* (province) as the colony's major territorial unit. Within a province, *barangays* were grouped into *pueblos* (municipalities).

The political divisions of the Philippines will constantly change to meet increasing demands for more effective governance and efficient delivery of services.

#### 4. CULTURE

Filipino culture is a fusion of indigenous Austronesian civilizations mixed with Hispanic and American. It has also been influenced by Chinese, Arab and Indian cultures.

The Hispanic influences are most evident in literature, music, folk dance, language, food, art and religion. It is interesting to note that, although the Philippines was ruled by Spain through Mexico and tied to it by the galleon trade, there was relatively little Mexican influence in the Philippines. For example, Filipinos took a preference for Iberian dishes, such as *arroz valenciana*, than those of the Mexican Indians, except for *adobo* whose ingredients were introduced from Mexico.

There is also a prevalence of Spanish surnames among Filipinos, as a result of a colonial decree implementing the Spanish naming system on the inhabitants of the islands. Thus, a Spanish name and surname does not usually denote Spanish ancestry.

The use of English is America's most visible legacy. Others include the love of basketball, movies, and fast food.

Most communities celebrate annual fiestas in honor of their patron saints. They also honor their heroes who helped in the shaping of the Filipino nation.

## II. THE PHILIPPINE FOREIGN POLICY

Like any other nation today, the Philippines can no longer be exclusively defined by the conventional ideas of territorial limits and boundaries. Dramatic progress and developments in trade, commerce, and information and technology have created a smaller but more complex world. Eleven million Filipinos are working in over 165 countries and on ships on the seven seas. And events in other countries and regions have consequences on the Philippines.

The Philippines is a founding and active member of the United Nations since its establishment on October 24, 1945 and the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It is also a member of the East Asia Summit (EAS), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Latin Union. It is a major non-NATO ally of the United States but also a member of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Philippines is also a founding member of the Asian Development Bank, which has its headquarters in Manila.

### 1. FUNDAMENTAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Philippines' pursuit of foreign policy is based on three important pillars: (1) the preservation and enhancement of national security; (2) the promotion and attainment of economic security through the mobilization of external resources for economic advancement and social development; and, (3) the protection of rights, and promotion of the welfare and interests of Filipinos overseas<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> "For the Macapagal-Arroyo Administration, the pursuit of foreign policy is based on three important pillars: (1) the preservation and enhancement of national security; (2) the promotion and attainment of economic security through development; and (3) the protection of rights, and promotion of the welfare and

To make sure that Philippine foreign policy would not only be truly relevant but also focused, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo identified several realities that characterize the country's international and regional environment to which the government has to respond in order to achieve its goals.

The first reality is that China, Japan and the United States and their relationships will be the determining influence in the security situation and economic evolution of East Asia.

Second, more and more Philippine foreign decisions have to be made in the context of ASEAN.

Third, the international Islamic community will continue to be important for the Philippines.

Fourth, the coming years will see the growing importance of multilateral and inter-regional organizations to promote common interest.

Fifth, the defense of the nation's sovereignty and the protection of its environment and natural resources can be carried out only to the extent that it asserts its rights over its maritime territory and gets others to respect those rights.

Sixth, the country's economic growth will continue to be friendly to both domestic and foreign direct investment.

Seventh, a country like the Philippines can benefit most quickly from international tourism.

And eighth, overseas Filipinos will continue to be recognized for their critical role in the country's economic and social stability.

## 2. THE WAR AGAINST TERROR

These "realities" of Philippine foreign policy were first articulated by the President in her *vin d'honneur* for the diplomatic community shortly after the change of national leadership in January 2001.

Since then, however, one other "reality" of foreign policy has come to the fore: the need to combat international terrorism.

Since terrorism changed the face of the world after the Twin Towers attack on 9/11, the Arroyo Administration's foreign policy has been marked by its categorical support for the war against terror<sup>1</sup>.

Domestic terrorists, particularly the Abu Sayyaf Group that operate in Mindanao as well as elements of the Jemaah Islamiyah who were allegedly hiding in that island under the protection of their brother Muslims, had to be dealt with quickly.

Thus, in a controversial policy decision, the *Balikatan* exercises between the United States and the Philippines were held in southern Philippines that allowed the Americans to provide training, aid, and assistance while Filipino soldiers did the fighting.

Outside the country, the Philippines maintains its active role in sending peacekeeping missions in conflict-ridden areas. The Philippines has been engaged in peacekeeping operations in such countries as East Timor, Kosovo, Liberia, and Iraq until its participation was withdrawn.

## 3. THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

President Arroyo opened a diplomatic front in the quest for peace. Before this, force was used to address the communist rebels and the Muslim secessionists. These armed groups were

---

interest of Filipino overseas. These pillars overlap and can not be considered apart from each other", in AA.VV., *The Macapagal-Arroyo Presidency and Administration. Record and Legacy (2001-2004)*, Quezon City, University of the Philippines Press, 2004, p. 204.

<sup>1</sup> Noel M. Morada, "Philippine Foreign Relations after September 11 (2001-2005)", in Noel M. Morada y Teresa S. Encarnación Tadeo, *Philippine Politics and Governance. An Introduction*, Quezon City, University of the Philippines, 2006, pp. 537-564.

firstly isolated from international support, then international support was brought entirely on the side of government in pursuit of the peace process.

Talks have been conducted with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) under the auspices of Malaysia. And closer collaboration with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) has been developed as an important factor in the search for peace in Mindanao.

The OIC Committee of the Eight, under Indonesia's leadership, has monitored the implementation of the 1996 peace agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Malaysia, on the other hand, is actively involved as a partner for peace by sending peace monitors to help maintain the ceasefire with the MILF while negotiations are going on.

To address the root causes of internal conflict in Mindanao and attain peace, the government mobilized diplomatic forces to obtain development assistance and investments for conflict and post-conflict areas.

#### 4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Within the framework of strengthening bilateral relations, the major thrusts of the Arroyo Administration were to open world markets for Philippine products, promote investments and tourism, and tap sources of official development assistance.

Philippine foreign policy applied to trade the momentum generated by the dynamic political and security relations with the United States. As a result, economic ties remain strong and the US has continued support for the country's development priorities, particularly in the areas of agricultural modernization, financial sector reform, development of small and medium enterprises, and in accelerating the economic transformation of Mindanao as a foundation for durable peace in that island.

Efforts at the bilateral front are complemented by regional approaches to economic issues, which continue to increase in importance, specifically in the Asia Pacific region, as the East Asian economies are growing rapidly.

The Philippine policy to continue to strengthen its ties with the Asian and Asia-Pacific region is substantiated by close and highly interactive cooperation with both the ASEAN member countries and the APEC member economies.

As far as global trade is concerned, the Philippines shares the sentiments of other countries and asks for better market access, dismantling of trade barriers, abolition of all forms of export subsidies and unjustifiable export prohibitions and restrictions, and differential treatment for products of export interest to developing countries. These are the basic guiding posts for the country's participation in the World Trade Organization (WTO):

“The country's political leadership has met the challenges of the new global dimension in varying ways. Some, like Ramos and his successor, Macapagal-Arroyo, have been more effective and proactive in mobilizing and benefiting from a globalized world, while others have been hemmed in by the restricting circumstances of their administration, like Aquino, or absence of political savvy and wisdom as projected in the Estrada administration. In any case, the democratic process after Marcos has led to legitimize a vision of a country that demands equality, deliberation, and participation as well as sense of dignity and well-being, in the local and international realms to fulfill its national goals and aspirations”<sup>1</sup>.

#### 5. HEIGHTENED PURSUIT OF FOREIGN POLICY

The Philippines have intensified the pursuit of foreign policy in other areas as well.

The President has decided to bring foreign policy to bear on the war against crime, particularly the serious threat of illegal drugs. Major victories in the war against illegal drugs have

---

<sup>1</sup> Natalia María Lourdes M. Morales, “Post-EDSA Philippine Foreign Relations, 1986-2001”, in *ibidem*, p. 530.

resulted from the goodwill established between the Philippines and China and their common desire to vigorously address the international drug problem.

The Arroyo Administration has also placed heavy emphasis on protecting overseas Filipinos. Through diplomacy, it is convincing host states to treat overseas Filipinos fairly and with dignity and to punish those who harm Filipino workers. There are measures in place to address possible crisis situations, even to the point of mapping out how to move masses of overseas Filipinos out of harm's way.

The Philippines will continue to pursue a foreign policy that is responsive to the needs and circumstances of the country and its people while being attuned to the realities of the external environment.

### III. SPANISH LANGUAGE AS A PHILIPPINE DIPLOMATIC TOOL

The modern Republic of the Philippines is a subject with total rights within the international society. As an independent subject, the Philippines has to search for an independent foreign policy that can achieve its goals vis-à-vis the international community. Inside this scenario, common objects of interest can be disputed or discussed between subjects of the international community. Different tools and instruments can be operated to deal with these common objects. This is where the Spanish language appears as a diplomatic instrument in dealing with particular subjects of the international community, in the discussion of common objects of interest. Hence, by relying in the cultural complexity of Philippine culture and history, the current Republic has an input and advantage with a lot of subject of the international community—from Islamic countries, to the Commonwealth and Hispanic nations:

“Our identity is found in the totality of our historical experience and cultural diversity—which is the amalgam of the waves of civilizations and traditions that have swept our shores over the centuries. There are more than enough elements in this amalgam to give us pride of the richness of our past and to bring us together behind the goal of economic development. The so-called “Western” influence that narrow nationalists deplore as obstacle to independence is, in today’s economic environment, an advantage for economic growth and development. It is the element that can facilitate our recovery and takeoff as a new economic miracle in Asia. It is the key to industrialization and modernization. So as we look forward, we can at the same time search into the legacy of our past to find our soul”<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, the use of Spanish language for diplomatic purposes it is not a new phenomenon in the Philippines. It is was pointed out since the Philippines became an independent nation the relevance of using Spanish in dealing with certain subject of the international community, given the enormous benefits of cultural links for political goals. This was the statement of Carlos P. Rómulo, who obtained international position and benefits to the Philippines thanks to the use of Spanish in international relations:

“Sin embargo, voy a revelaros una cosa. Mis mejores amigos han sido los embajadores hispanoamericanos en la Organización de las Naciones Unidas. De corazón, ellos me han brindado su amistad porque con ellos yo hablaba español. Somos en verdad, y así nos consideran, hermanos de aquellos hombres. En las Naciones Unidas componen un grupo sólido de 21 votos que siempre se han inclinado para favorecer nuestras ambiciones internacionales y si a estos votos se

---

<sup>1</sup> Amando Doronila (1992), in José V. Abueva (ed.), *The Book of Nationalism. Filipino Nationalism. Various Meanings, Constant and Changing Goals, Continuing Relevance/ Nasyonalismo Pilipino*. Sari-sari Kahulugan, Patuloy at Nagbabagong mga Layon, at Dumadaloy na Kaugnayan, Quezon City, University of the Philippines Press, 1999, p. 580.

añaden los del Bloque Afro-Asiático, al que también pertenecemos, nuestra posición internacional no conoce segundo en fuerza”<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore in the current Philippine foreign policy, under the presidency of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, given her fluency in Spanish language and being a member of the *Academia Filipina de la Lengua Española*, the linguistic instrument has been used for diplomatic accomplishments. Spanish language certainly is a relevant instrument in approaching distant positions in the international arena, with a lot of subject of the international community, as all the Latin American countries. Accordingly, in search of an independent relation with nations in process of development, Spanish is a needed language for practically the complete America. Moreover, in the current relations with the Asian-Pacific arena, the American coast speaks Spanish from California to Patagonia. In consequence, Spanish language could be a great advantage for the Philippine relation in the new Pacific economic zone:

“The demand of an increasing number of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America for freedom from imperialist dictates and for economic sovereignty, development and extrication from the debt trap, is encouraging to the Philippine revolutionary forces. Political and economical cooperation among countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America can be developed for their individual and collective benefit”<sup>2</sup>.

Obviously, Spanish language has been used as well in the recent bilateral relations between the Philippines and Spain, as the last visit of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to Spain in December 2007. It that occasion, she inaugurated the Philippine-Spanish Annual Meeting (Tribuna) in Madrid:

«Queridos amigos de Filipinas.

Estas fechas de aniversarios son testimonios a los calurosos y cordiales vínculos que unirán a nuestros pueblos para siempre.

Aprovechando nuestras afinidades en el idioma, en la fe y en la cultura, podemos anticipar oportunidades cada vez más extensas para la acción conjunta entre nuestros gobiernos y directamente entre nuestros pueblos.

Otro pilar de nuestra seguridad nacional es nuestra seguridad económica – para generar inversiones extranjeras, inversiones Españolas, crear empleos y extender la oportunidad económica a cada provincia de nuestra gran nación. Con este fin, trato de convencer a los empresarios y empresarias a que inviertan en nuestro país.

Nuestros aliados españoles son parte de nuestra historia y parte de nuestro futuro, y debemos comunicarles los grandes avances que hemos conseguido en Filipinas. Nuestros trabajadores inmigrantes son nuestros embajadores en España además de nuestro Embajador Bernardo y son parte de mi agenda en esta visita. Me da mucho orgullo su contribución a nuestra imagen en España y me gustó mucho mi encuentro con nuestros trabajadores tan aplicados en este viaje el último domingo.

El proceso tribuna, iniciado en Noviembre de dos mil cinco, es una importante inversión en el desarrollo progresivo de los vínculos bilaterales entre España y Filipinas. La primera tribuna, celebrada aquí en Madrid, inició un nuevo diálogo que intensificó nuestra interacción y nuestro interés mutuo. El intercambio de opiniones entre los representantes del gobierno, el sector privado, el mundo académico y la sociedad civil de ambos países nos da una riqueza de opiniones e ideas para los nuevos programas cooperativos. Este gran esfuerzo elevará nuestra relación a nuevos niveles más altos»<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Carlos P. Rómulo, “Sería una tragedia prescindir del castellano”, en AA.VV., *Discursos de Malolos y Poesías Filipinas en Español*, Manila, Departamento de Educación, 1963, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> José Ma. Sison y Julieta de Lima, *Philippine Economy and Politics*, Manila, Aklat ng Bayan, 2002, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> PGMA's Remarks during the Opening Ceremony of the 3rd Tribuna España-Filipinas. Casa Asia, Palacio del Patio de Miraflores, December 4, 2007: [<http://www.ops.gov.ph/spain-uk2007/speeches.htm>]

In this occasion, Gloria Arroyo addressed to the Filipino community in Madrid, including Spanish as one of the three language of the speech: Tagalog, English and Spanish. Accordingly, this is the standard model of the speeches of Gloria, sifting between Tagalog and English after every paragraph or block. In this case, Spanish was introduced to target a Philippine audience:

«La estrecha relación entre nuestros países también se manifiesta en la presencia de ustedes la gran comunidad Filipina aquí en España. Estamos orgullosos de vuestros logros y vuestras contribuciones a este país. Asimismo reconocemos vuestro papel vital en el forjamiento de los vínculos personales más estrechos entre los pueblos Filipinos y Españoles.

Overseas Filipinos like you are honored by the government and the people for your sacrifice and your dedication to your work, your family and our nation. And we welcome your contribution»<sup>1</sup>.

It is possible to observe a growth in the quantity of Spanish used in the speeches of Gloria Arroyo. Hence, the use of Spanish in the *Formal Opening of the 3rd Philippine-Spanish Friendship Day Celebration, in Iloilo 30 June 2005* was minimal. The same can be said in the speech during the *Commemoration of the 109<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Siege of Baler and Observance of the 6<sup>th</sup> Spanish Friendship Day Celebration in Baler, 30 June 2008*. However, in her visit to Spain Spanish language was largely used, pointing out the capacity of language to modulate diplomatic strategies.

Nonetheless, beyond Latin America and Spain, there are other Spanish-speaking countries, as Equatorial Guinea in Africa. Precisely the establishment of relations with the Republic of Equatorial Guinea has been the modern moment in which Spanish language has been used largely to implement a particular international relation. This is how Gloria Macapagal Arroyo welcomed Teodoro Obiang Nguema in his visit in 2006, where Roxas boulevard was adorned with dozens of Equatorial Guinean flags:

«Esta noche celebramos el encuentro de dos países que tienen un patrimonio común, pero por muchos años no han podido acercarse como hubieran debido, a causa de la distancia geográfica que les separa.

The Philippines and Equatorial Guinea both have extensive aquatic resources and rich agricultural lands. Both of our countries and our peoples come from aboriginal ancestors. Both were under the Spaniards for many centuries and thus are Christians in majority.

The Philippines recognized Equatorial Guinea in 1968 when it became an independent country. Sin embargo, casi cuarenta años después, las relaciones entre nuestros dos países no han prosperado por mucho que nosotros hubiéramos deseado. Hoy día cambiaremos todo aquello. We are honored your Excellency that you have brought so many of your Cabinet members, your distinguished cabinet here with you, so that we could explore cooperation in all possible fields.

De acuerdo con nuestra fructífera reunión de hoy, espero que nuestros oficiales harán el seguimiento debido de las áreas de nuestra significativa colaboración, from energy and human resources to agriculture, education, fisheries and culture and finance»<sup>2</sup>.

In 2007, the President of the Philippines visited for the first time an African country, being Equatorial Guinea de destination. In this visit, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo pointed out again the Hispanic links between the two nations — «Equatorial Guinea is the only Hispanic country in Africa and the Philippines is the only Hispanic country in Asia» in words of the President of the

<sup>1</sup> PGMA's Speech during Her Meeting with the Filipino Community in Madrid. Colegio Nuestra Señora de las Maravillas, Madrid, Spain, 02 December 2007: [<http://www.ops.gov.ph/spain-uk2007/speeches.htm>]

<sup>2</sup> PGMA's Speech during a State Dinner in honor of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo and Doña Constancia Mangue de Obiang Rizal, Malacañang, 19 May 2006. It is possible to listen the speech in the following link: [<http://www.ops.gov.ph/gma/statedinnermbasogo19May06.wma>].



Philippines — and the cultural and historical commonalities to enforce a better bilateral understanding:

«Señoras y señores,

Buenos días. Muchas gracias a la Cámara de Representantes del Pueblo de Guinea Ecuatorial por esta sesión especial en mi honor.

La legislatura es la voz del pueblo, en África así mismo en Asia. We are proud to say that in Asia, the Philippine Congress has been a beacon of freedom for one hundred years now.

Our two countries share a legacy and a similar culture though we are located far away from each other, you in the western edge of Africa and we in the eastern edge of Asia, and the color of our skin is different from each other. Equatorial Guinea is the only Hispanic country in Africa and the Philippines is the only Hispanic country in Asia.

Por eso nos alegramos mucho cuando el Presidente Obiang realizó una visita de Estado en Filipinas en Mayo del año pasado. Se fue él para realizar los lazos bilaterales entre Filipinas y Guinea Ecuatorial, y explorar las maneras para la cooperación y una mayor interacción entre los pueblos de los dos países.

Exploramos las nuevas áreas de cooperación y hablamos de las oportunidades que cada país ofrece.

Durante su visita, el Presidente Obiang expresó interés en las oportunidades para la formación y un mayor conocimiento técnico, en particular en los sectores agrícolas, pesquero, financiero, mientras que nosotros por nuestra parte expresamos interés en las concesiones en el petróleo.

Nosotros presenciamos la firma del Acuerdo General en la Cooperación Económica, Cultura, Ciencia y Tecnología, y un Acuerdo sobre la Promoción y Protección Recíproca de Inversiones - los dos primeros acuerdos bilaterales entre Filipinas y Guinea Ecuatorial.

Agradecemos la oportunidad de reunirse de nuevo con el Presidente Obiang para renovar las relaciones bilaterales entre Filipinas y Guinea Ecuatorial.

Esta es mi primera visita de Estado a un país Africano desde que asumí la presidencia en 2001.

He venido a Guinea Ecuatorial para fortalecer aún más los lazos entre nuestros dos países y continuar las iniciativas que nuestros países han empezado durante la visita a Filipinas de su Presidente el año pasado.

Nuestra visita de Estado aquí es una buena ocasión para fomentar estas formas de cooperación y fortalecer aun más los lazos bilaterales y, basándonos en nuestros lazos históricos, a un mayor desarrollo y progreso»<sup>1</sup>.

In sum, Spanish language has been used in the construction of the modern Philippine Republic. Moreover, not only Filipinos used Spanish language to formalize and create their modern State and local affairs, but also to deal as a subject of the international community. The modern Republic of the Philippine has been using Spanish language for several political affairs, both internally and internationally. Even nowadays Spanish still is a diplomatic instrument in the Philippine foreign policy. In consequence, it should be needed to validate the role of the Philippines as subject of the international community and the impact of the Spanish language in its foreign relations.

---

<sup>1</sup> *President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's speech at the opening session of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea's Cámara de Representantes del Pueblo during her state visit to the West African nation, June 26, 2007: [http://www.ops.gov.ph/singapore2007/speeches.htm].*