

WELCOME REMARKS

by **Fr. Jose Ramon Villarin**

President, Ateneo de Manila University

His Excellency Kim Jae-Shin, Ambassador of South Korea to the Philippines; Honorable Luis Cruz, Assistant Secretary for ASEAN Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs and Former Philippines Ambassador to South Korea; Distinguished speakers; Honored guests, ladies and gentlemen, Good morning.

More than six decades after the Republic of the Philippines and the Republic of Korea first established bilateral relations, we are again poised on the cusp of an historic moment.

Through six decades, our relations have continuously and consistently strengthened, and the impending ASEAN+3 integration has the potential to bring our relationship to another level.

The Ateneo de Manila University, therefore, is honored to host a conference that explores and examines the social, cultural, economic and political relations between our two countries, especially in this age of borderless and virtual spaces.

In view of the ever-growing importance of Philippine-Korea relations and the impact of Korea's culture, economy, and technology on this vibrant region of Southeast Asia, the university established the Ateneo Initiative for Korean Studies.

I'd like to believe that we are building bridges here, bridges that destroy our isolation and disconnection. I hope that the bridges that will connect us to each other will lead to mutual development that preferentially targets those who are perennially excluded, the poor; a development that is also sustainable as it is inclusive, or in other words, a development that provides for the present but does not impoverish future generations by compromising the resources they will need as well.

It is our hope that the AIKS and this annual conference, together with our partner universities and institutions, will help lead to greater understanding and stronger connections between our peoples. The impact of these bridges we are building go beyond our respective shores. I hope you share our excitement in deepening our relations between our countries today and in the years ahead of us. Thank you.