



On behalf of Fr. Jose Ramon T. Villarin, President of the Ateneo de Manila University, it gives me great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to you all.

Climate change and disaster risk reduction have always been part of the Ateneo's priority areas. As a Filipino, Catholic, and Jesuit University, these issues have always figured prominently in our education, research, and advocacy.

In recent years, the significance of mangroves in disaster risk reduction and management has been highlighted. As both a carbon sink and a physical buffer against storm surges, mangrove ecosystems protect coastal areas, where the majority of our population resides. Thus, in line with the Ateneo de Manila University's goals towards mainstreaming environment and development and reducing disaster risk from climate change, we are happy to host this gathering of mangrove experts and managers!

We also acknowledge the issues in mangrove management are not easily solved, and that we need to work together if we wish to properly address these. In Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Laudato Si*, our Holy Father writes about the need for humility to recognize the "human roots of our ecological crisis." He talks about the need for a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach to achieve a unified strategy to tackle such a wicked problem. Thus, we recognize the importance of coming together to share data, insights, and best practices and how this contributes to the enhancement of mangrove management plans for the Philippines.

I thank all the resource persons and participants who generously share their knowledge and expertise. I also thank the Department of Environmental Science for making this gathering possible.

I hope that this summit will result in fruitful collaboration between and among all the provinces and I hope that everyone will be inspired to continue to protect and manage such an important ecosystem.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "EBautista".

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