

INTRODUCTION OF KEYNOTE SPEAKER

by **Ms. Sarah Domingo-Lipura**
Director, Korean Studies Program

Good morning.

Truly, it is a great pride and honor to introduce to you our keynote speaker for this morning, Hon. Jose de Venecia, Jr.

Hon. Jose de Venecia, Jr. was elected five times as Speaker of the House of Representatives—an unprecedented record in post-war Philippine Congress. Born in 1936 in Dagupan City, Pangasinan, he was the youngest among the seven children of Judge Jose Ravago de Venecia and Casimira Claveria.

He finished high school at De la Salle College Manila and subsequently took up journalism at the Ateneo de Manila, where he became editor of the *Guidon*, the official student newspaper, and editor-in-chief of the *Aegis*. In his senior year, the *Guidon* received a rare honor of being rated one of the best college newspapers of the world by New York's Columbia University.

After graduation, at the age of 19, he became Manila Bureau Chief and Philippine Correspondent for Pan-Asia newspaper Alliance, one of Asia's earliest wire agencies. He was first elected Congressman in 1969 at the age of 32, but after two years, Congress was abolished by President Marcos under Martial Law.

Upon democracy's return, he ran again in a new congressional seat and subsequently became Acting Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee. It was during this period in the 1990s that he began his deep involvement in the government's various peace-building efforts to end conflict and promote open dialogue. It was also during this time that he had the rare opportunity to visit Pyongyang and meet and converse with North Korean founder Kim Il-sung.

In 2000, he co-founded the International Conference of Asian Political Parties, a forum composed of more than 330 ruling opposition and independent political parties in 52 countries in Asia.

Just a few months ago, he met with Nepal's new Maoist premier, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and three other former premiers, who declared their unanimous support for a final peace settlement among the Philippine New People's Army, Communist Party, and the government of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

Ladies and gentlemen, our keynote speaker, Hon. Jose de Venecia, Jr.