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**MALACAÑANG PALACE
Manila**

**GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President, Republic of the Philippines**

An overview of the 2004 National Elections would show that its conduct have been generally peaceful and credible. We have also made important reforms in legislating laws on electoral modernization as well as in breathing life to the right of our countrymen overseas to participate in the political process through the Absentee Voting Law.

This is not to deny various challenges and setbacks encountered from the period prior, during and after election day. Among these are the failure to implement a computerized voting and counting system, increase in election-related violence, allegations of electoral fraud and the slow pace of counting and canvassing especially for national positions. Nonetheless, I believe that the Filipino people should be proud that they have reaffirmed their faith in the electoral process as an effective tool in crystallizing their will.

As we take stock of our experience in the recent national elections, I am pleased that the 2nd National Electoral Reform Summit is being convened to look into the problems that have been encountered, with the end goal of reforming our electoral process. With fresh data from the recent elections measured against the goals set forth during the First National Electoral Reform Summit, I expect a pointed analysis of the problems encountered and inputs on how we can address them so that we may strengthen our electoral system. Indeed, pursuing reforms in the areas of electoral modernization, absentee voting, among others, is vital in ensuring that the electoral system will continue to be a strong foundation of our democracy and as the primary instrument of political participation.

I therefore laud the various stakeholder-participants to this summit for coming together to share their insights for the greater interest of the country. Your efforts to impart your expertise to thresh out complex and multifaceted issues and concerns under the spirit of unity deserves commendation. May you have a fruitful summit and I am looking forward to the output of this undertaking.

Mabuhay!

**Republic of the Philippines
SENATE
Pasay City**

**FRANKLIN DRILON
Senate President**

Warm greetings to the organizers of the 2nd National Electoral Reform Summit!

I would like to congratulate the executive committee, members and guests of the 2nd National Electoral Reform Summit which will be held from September 1-3, 2004 at the Sulo Hotel in Quezon City.

I would like to commend the men and women behind this event for organizing such summit. This will indeed be a time to evaluate the performance of the Commission on Elections during the past elections and to plan the electoral exercise. We shall look forward to seeing our future elections with honesty and credibility. Rest assured of my support in all your endeavors!

Mabuhay Kayong Lahat!

**Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City**

**JOSE DE VENECIA, JR.
House Speaker**

I congratulate the convenors and organizers of the 2nd National Electoral Reform Summit to be held on September 1-3, 2004.

The conduct of elections is truly the lynchpin of our representative democracy – the medium by which our people express their sovereign will. Needless to say, we must ensure that electoral exercises are clean and honest because these are essential to national stability and progress.

We in Congress, have recognized the need for electoral reforms. Our efforts toward this end are reflected in the Absentee Voting Law that finally enabled millions of overseas Filipino workers to exercise their right of suffrage. During the 12th Congress, we also proposed state financing for political campaigns, to end unholy alliances between politicians and vested interests. While this latter bill failed to muster approval by the Senate, we will continue to espouse this and other fundamental changes in our political system, to make our government truly responsive to the needs of the people.

I am confident this Summit will help crystallize a common legislative agenda that will meet our people's call for political and governmental reforms.

Mabuhay!



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