

Opening Remarks by Ambassador Annika Thunborg

Conference on Treaty-Making and Cross-Cultural Diplomacy in Asia - 29 February 2024 | Malcolm Hall

Good morning, Good moron, Magandang umaga!

I would like to acknowledge:

- Chancellor Edgardo Carlo L. Vistan II (Chancellor, UP Diliman)
- Dean Darlene B. Berberabe (Dean, UP College of Law)
- Prof. Rommel J. Casis (Director, Institute of International Legal Studies)
- Prof. Stefan Amirell (Principal Investigator & Professor, Linnaeus University)
- Prof. Hans Hägerdal (Co-Investigator & Professor Linnaeus University)
- Co-investigators in the research program and professors in the university

It is a great honor to be here this morning, alongside distinguished and dedicated academics.

Thank you to the Linnaeus University Concurrences, the Swedish Research Council, and the Asia Center at UP Diliman for inviting me to deliver the opening remarks in this conference.

What I would like to highlight this morning is the importance of investing in research and higher education, of which this is an example, and the collaboration between Sweden and the Philippines in this regard.

I am proud to say that there are numerous projects and programs between our two countries in academic research, under the larger themes of democracy and human rights, climate action, and sustainable socio-economic development.

Let me mention the Swedish Institute Scholarship for Global Professionals as well as research and academic exchanges funded by SIDA in Asia and SouthEastAsia in areas such as the Economy and

the Environment, Science-Policy Interface and Forest Landscape Governance; Women, Law, Development as well as Sustainability, Inclusiveness, Integration for university Support Services.

Learning and professional development also takes the form of capacity building. For example, Sweden holds trainings for Filipino professionals through the SI Management Program and the Global Executive Leadership Program, for journalists through the Fojo Media Institute, on disaster risk management by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, on a human rights-based approach by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute.

Let me also mention the World Maritime University which is an institution under the International Maritime Organization situated in Malmö in southern Sweden. Over 220 filipinos in shipping, seafaring and maritime sciences have graduated from this University.

I am proud to say that of the estimated 500 Filipinos in total who have undertaken these higher education or capacity building programs, a majority have come back to the Philippines contributing to the country's development. Some have also become active members of the Sweden Alumni Network which we at the Embassy work closely with.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the Philippines, I often talk about Sweden as an innovative nation. I get asked, "What makes Sweden so innovative?" While there is not one answer to this question, private sector investments to academe plays a major role.

The Swedish private sector invests greatly in universities and students' research and development projects through grants, scholarships, capacity building and innovative research projects.

Many leading Swedish companies invest around 20% of profits in innovation, R&D, and S&T, this also keeps their global leadership in high-tech and advanced solutions. The Wallenberg group for example

are known for investing as much as 40% of their yearly profits in their foundations focused on R&D.

As a rule, Sweden invests more than 3 per cent of the country's growth domestic product (GDP) in R&D, 1/3 from the public sector, I e taxpayers' money and 2/3 from the private companies. ((An estimated SEK 46.8 billion (or 5 billion USD) in the central government budget was allocated to R&D in 2023.))

Sweden's long-term focus on education and research has had a major impact on the capacity for innovation where we continue to rank one of the highest in the world.

Private sector investments plays an important role in Sweden's educational system although this system is mainly public or publicly funded.

In 1842, Sweden introduced compulsory schooling for 7- to 13-year-olds. This proved to be a game-changing move, as it raised the overall level of education among the people, and became a vital component in Sweden's journey from a poor agricultural nation to a welfare state in which all citizens have a chance to develop their potential.

Today, the Swedish education system while certainly not free from challenges, is internationally known for being multi-disciplinary especially in higher education at the university level, with cross-cutting themes and issues that enable students to learn problem solving and research skills needed to respond to contemporary challenges.

Universities also foster the culture of innovation and collaboration by giving students access to science parks, research labs and grants.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sweden and the Philippines' long-term partnership is focused on expanding trade and foreign direct investments in areas such as innovation, health, responsible mining, urban development, sustainability, and defense and security.

We cannot deny the serious geopolitical challenges our world is facing. Russia's illegal, full-scale attack on Ukraine and on Europe's security. Tensions in East Asia and in South East Asia where international law and the rules based international order is not respected by a major player. The use of economies and technologies as weapons.

Security in the Euro-Atlantic region and the Indo-Pacific region are interrelated and have led Sweden to enhance its capacity and collaborations in areas of defense and security. We look forward to becoming a member of Nato in the next couple of months to close the security gap in Northern Europe and to enhance security in the Nordic and Nordic-Baltic region, in Europe and globally. ((Sweden's current foreign policy first and foremost prioritizes support to Ukraine and deepened cooperation within its neighborhood, in the Nordic and Nordic-Baltic regions, and in the European Union.))

International law remains a cornerstone of Swedish and transatlantic security. We believe in the importance of negotiations in peaceful resolutions between states. Disputes, conflicts, and attacks should be too costly for states, and peaceful negotiation should always be the first choice.

As an academic myself, with a PhD in political science, I believe I will have plenty to learn from this conference.

Fora and discussions like these are important, as is looking at history to gain a deeper and broader view of global events. Each political and historic situation is unique, and one cannot compare events and draw conclusions. However, better understanding history helps us with the decisions we need to make in our contemporary world.

I look forward to a spirited and enlightening discussion here today.

Thank you, tack, maraming salamat.