

Remarks before the 2017 U.P. Alumni Homecoming

Never Give Up Honor, Sovereignty and Sovereign Rights

Justice Antonio T. Carpio

A pleasant afternoon to everyone.

On behalf of this year's alumni awardees, I wish to thank the Board of Directors of the University of the Philippines Alumni Association headed by its President, Atty. Ramon Maronilla, for this signal award conferred on us. I am sure I speak for the all of the awardees here tonight that we are truly honored and humbled by this recognition. We will certainly treasure this award.

This year's theme of the Alumni Homecoming is "*Itanghal ang Dangal*" - Show Honor. Honor is of course the first half of the U.P. Motto – "Honor and Excellence."

The emphasis on showing honor correctly points out that honor comes before excellence, that there must be honor above all, even as there must be excellence in all that we do.

For excellence without honor is a recipe for national disaster. A society that has an abundance of excellence but a scarcity of honor is a society in deep trouble. Excellence without honor creates evil geniuses and develops a culture

of greed – all the expense of the common good. That is why the University must continuously teach our students, and the alumni must ceaselessly show by example, that there must be honor above all, even as we strive for excellence in all that we do.

Honor is priceless for once it has a price, then it can be for sale. A nation's sovereignty and sovereign rights are also priceless. If you put a price tag to our country's sovereignty or sovereign rights, then another country may buy our country's sovereignty or sovereign rights.

Our sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea, like our honor as U.P. alumni, are priceless. They are not for sale. Our sovereign rights belong to present and future generations of Filipinos. The duty of this present generation of Filipinos is to defend and preserve our sovereign rights, and pass on these rights to the next generation for the benefit of all succeeding generations of Filipinos. No generation of Filipinos, and no individual Filipino, has the right to sell or waive the country's sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea. Any such sale or waiver is a betrayal of the nation.

In this battle to defend and preserve our sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea, we use the most powerful weapon ever invented by man, a weapon that can neutralize warships, warplanes, missiles and nuclear bombs – and that weapon is the Rule of Law. Armed solely with this legal

weapon, we won a great battle last July 2016 at The Hague before an UNCLOS tribunal, which awarded to the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea a vast Exclusive Economic Zone, with an area larger than our total land area.

The next step is to enforce the award of the tribunal. This involves perseverance, steely determination, and a well-thought and carefully crafted long-term strategy. I have no doubt that if we stay the course, the award of the tribunal will gradually be followed over time because the alternative is the demise of the Law of the Sea. If the Law of the Sea cannot apply in the South China Sea, then it cannot apply in the rest of the oceans and seas of the world. Instead of the Rule of Law, the Rule of the Naval Canon will prevail in the oceans and seas. The world community of civilized nations will not allow this to happen.

And even if we cannot immediately enforce the award because of the overwhelming might of the other side, we still acquit ourselves with respect before future generations of Filipinos because we are doing our duty with honor in accordance with the Rule of Law. We would be setting a fine example to future generations of what it means to do our historic duty with honor. That to me is the true meaning of *“Itanghal ang dangal”* - Show, display and uphold Honor against all odds.

Today, we face the gravest external threat to Philippine national security since World War II. At stake is a huge maritime area rich in fishery, oil, gas and other mineral resources - – either we keep this huge maritime area or we lose it to China forever. The battle for the West Philippine Sea is the modern-day equivalent of the battles that our forebears fought, and even sacrificed their lives, to win and secure our sovereignty on land. It is the turn of our generation to face the historic duty to defend the sovereign rights of the Filipino people in the sea.

To my fellow alumni of this great University: *never give up your honor, never give up our sovereignty, and never give up our sovereign rights!*

Maraming salamat, mabuhay ang Pilipinas, mabuhay ang Unibersidad ng Pilipinas, mabuhay tayong lahat!
