

Presidential Communications Operations Office

Presidential News Desk

SPEECH OF

PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE

DURING THE ARRIVAL OF COVID-19 ASTRAZENECA VACCINES

[Delivered at Villamor Air Base in Pasay City | 04 March 2021]

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr.; Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps; World Health Organization officers and staff led by Country Representative Rabindra Abeyasinghe and Representatives of the United Nations International Children’s Fund; National Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana; Health Secretary Francisco Duque; Senator Bong Go; Cabinet Secretary Karlo Alexei Nograles; Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade; Presidential Spokesperson Herminio “Harry” Roque; National Task Force Chief Implementer and Vaccine Czar Carlito Galvez Jr.; National Task Force Deputy Chief Implementer Secretary Vivencio Dizon; AFP Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Cirilito Sobejana; PNP Chief General Debold Sinas; Philippine Air Force Commanding General Lieutenant General Allen Paredes; PCG Commandant Admiral George Ursabia Jr.; other distinguished guests; fellow workers in government; my friends.

Today, we welcome to the Philippines the first batch of more than 487,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines.

I thank the [COVAX] Facility, co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi and [the] World Health Organization (WHO) alongside its partner the UNICEF, for this delivery.

As I have said before, these vaccines should be treated as a global public good.

The need for international solidarity and cooperation cannot be made clearer than with this pandemic—because everyone is safe --- no one is safe globally until everybody is safe.

I likewise commend our Vaccine Czar, Secretary Carlito Galvez, the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, and the Department of Health for making this possible.

Let me thank you to our key partners in the international community, represented by their Ambassadors tonight. Their cooperation in public health is very much needed. Positive engagement is very much welcome.

These vaccines, manufactured by the [United Kingdom's] AstraZeneca in partnership with Oxford University, will further boost our ongoing national vaccination program.

It also comes a few days after the arrival of the donated vaccines from China and our highly successful vaccination rollout in various COVID-19 referral hospitals in the country.

Our Food and Drug Administration granted the required Emergency Use Authorization for AstraZeneca vaccine last [January], making it eligible for distribution and use in the country.

Our health authorities are also actively collaborating with their international counterparts in conducting continuous studies on vaccine safety and efficacy.

As we move forward, I am directing all government agencies to actively institutionalize and sustain the whole-of-government approach in addressing our country's COVID-19 situation.

I also assure the Filipino people that your government will continue working to ensure the immediate distribution of the available vaccines to our communities.

On this note, I would like to appeal to all our kababayans: Please get vaccinated against COVID-19 and be the government's partner in preventing further spread of the disease.

I encourage you to get vaccinated at the soonest possible time. These vaccines are safe, and they are the key to reopening our society.

Let us continue observing and practicing health and safety protocols while waiting for more COVID-19 vaccines to reach the Philippines.

We may not be out of the woods yet — but we are making progress and the end is in sight.

And with your cooperation, we will overcome this pandemic and ensure the health and safety of everyone.

I'd like to just add a few words from this prepared speech.

I don't know how to express my gratitude to the donor countries that you remembered the poor nations is in fact already a plus for humanity.

And in behalf of the Republic of the Philippines and of the people and all, I'd like to say again that we felt the gratitude in our hearts and may God bless you for your benevolence.

Thank you. *[applause]*

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