

# Opening Remarks

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Ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

The honor is mine for being invited to address the Academy's venerable members, who compose the select circle of our country's most outstanding scientists.

The annual celebration of the National Science and Technology Week (NSTW) is incomplete without the annual meeting of the respectable members of the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST). Science and technology (S & T), like the role of every scientist and technologist, is very utilitarian in nature. Although scientists in our country are not given much prestige, which is not the case in other countries, the wheels of progress definitely would not turn sans the scientists and technologists.

Yesterday, during the keynote speech of President Aquino at the NSTW opening ceremonies, I shared her empathy for the scientists whom she regarded not only as builders of this nation but also as saviors of many people who have been given scientific alerts in the course of natural phenomena that occurred in the country. But one thing makes me sad, -- and I'm sure this makes many of you academicians who are full-blooded scientists sad as well -- that this unscience-cultured society only recognizes and gives attention to scientists in times of eclipses, typhoons, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Come what may, though, the scientists' role in the progress of this nation, in the lifestyle of every Filipino, could never be taken for granted.

The direction of science and technology (S & T) today is clear and challenging. The Science and Technology Master Plan launched last year has already brought in so many bright prospects to the S & T national agenda. Its three major strategies with various programs are now in place and moving successfully in the countryside. As this Master Plan is a collaborative

accomplishment of many sectors, I am indeed delighted and appreciative of the support being provided by the private agencies, financing groups, the academe, entrepreneurs, farmers' groups and several other organizations, to the fruits of science and technology.

As scientists, your primary task is bringing S & T in the service of the people. And this is being done by the S & T Master Plan, which focuses on the modernization of the production sector through massive technology transfer and commercialization. The Comprehensive Technology Transfer and Commercialization Program (CTTC), as centerpiece of this first strategy, offers livelihood opportunities to help alleviate the poverty-related problems.

As scientists, your search for knowledge should be eternal to effect progressive innovations that would lead to industrialization. That is why the S & T Master Plan's Strategy II aims at upgrading research and development capability. This strategy directs goals for providing the missing link between our scientific base and innovation and productivity.

No other group except that of scientists should initiate and strive hard to create a national consciousness on the importance of science and technology. This target is being pushed by the S & T Master Plan's Strategy III, which bats for development of S & T infrastructure, including manpower development and creation of a science culture.

We have as bottomline the S & T Master Plan. We tapped many sectors, as well as several organizations and civic groups. We have strengthened our information dissemination. Today, we can truly claim that there were a lot of times when we hogged the limelight through the tri-media, not only as an aftermath of disasters, but also with the interesting science projects that we have launched and will still be launching.

Strategy III has offered the country's first science centrum, which we opened last year, as exploratorium of science for children and adults. We were able to tap a million-dollar funding from the World Bank for our manpower development program. The scientific career system for you scientists is now in effect. This gives you the compensation you deserve with equivalent rates of up to the salary of an undersecretary.

There are other significant S & T records -- too many to mention -- which our scientists should be proud of. Still we expect other milestones to take place within the next few months. I hope this annual meeting of the Academy will further

pave the way for implementaiton of the Science and Technology Master Plan's programs and directions.

The challenge of our country's industrialization bid rests heavily on the scientists' shoulders. There should be a truly hospitable science environment and culture, coupled with a science-sensitive value system, to make science and technology our country's twin keys to industrialization.

I wish your Academy a very fruitful meeting.

Thank you and good day.

