



Closing remarks by HRH the Princess of Hanover

President of AMADE

San Lorenzo Church

26 October 2004

Olongapo, Subic Bay, The Philippines

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

I am very happy to be with all of you today. It is not just that your country is truly beautiful, or that your reputation for having a hospitable people is well-justified. It is also that I have, by being here, fulfilled a promise that I made to pay a visit to a very important person who is, regretfully, no longer here with us in this world. That person is a six-year old Filipino child, Jaster Bernal, who died early this year due to non-hereditary leukemia, a disease that is suspected to be connected with the toxic waste contamination of the former American military bases in Clark Air Base, Angeles City, Pampanga and Subic Naval Base, here in Olongapo City where he resided.

Toxic waste contamination is a problem that needs to be squarely addressed and remedied because many of its victims are those without the capacity or ability to defend themselves against its devastating effects. Most pitiable and in need of help are the children whose lives are, from the beginning, severely compromised. Justice must be done for these children. There must be remediation and compensation of toxic waste victims.

I have, as President of AMADE, World Association of Children's Friends, personally asked the American President, George Bush, for his "intervention to expedite the necessary countermeasures to redress this critical and life-threatening situation and to provide much needed humanitarian aid and compensation to the victims and their families". I was informed, however, by his subordinate that the Philippine government had agreed that the bases would be left in their existing conditions at the time of departure of the American military, without any other legal obligations.

My dear friends, it appears to me that the issue of concern is not legal, but moral. To redress the pitiful conditions that our children find themselves in, for reasons that are not of their own making, is a matter that can always – and should be – be defended, if not as a matter of legal obligation then as the right and moral thing to do.

The sad reality is that there appears to have no proper sanitary strategy taken by the military forces that one occupied these bases to ensure ecological balance. I have been told that the destruction of the ecosystem and the contamination of aquifers have dangerously affected the ecological balance in these former military bases. And more than disrupting this nation's environment, such contamination has crippled your children.

In coming to your province today, AMADE seeks to demonstrate its support for your efforts to seek justice and its continuing commitment to do all that it can to alleviate the plight of your suffering children. No child's life should be needlessly riddled with pain and disabilities. No parent deserves to experience the unnatural experience of outliving their children. And no government should be allowed to ignore this situation by mere expedient of invoking legal, but not necessarily moral, justifications.

AMADE will always be one with you in trying making children's lives better, in whatever part of the world they may be found.

Thank you