

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH AT THE MEETING WITH ASIA SOCIETY**

New York, United States of America

September 23, 2022

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Thank you very much, Secretary Ricky Manalo and the members of the Cabinet.

Mr. Kevin Rudd, President of the Asia Society; part of our delegation, the House Speaker, House Speaker Martin Romualdez; our Ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Babes Romualdez; all the distinguished guests who have come to join us this afternoon; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

I'm honored to speak before this esteemed organization that is the Asia Society. I, of course, commend your efforts in providing a platform for dialogue and action in building bridges towards a common vision of better future for us all.

A shared vision creates a commonality of interest that enables collective action. During the Philippines presidential election last May, I was given by our people a majority --- a mandate to lead a country to close of 110 million people. This represents a shared vision of strength through unity.

I called for unity throughout that campaign and I am humbled that my call for unity resonated with my fellow countrymen and echoed their desire for a better future. They rejected the politics of division, as I --- during the campaign and up to now, said nothing to offend any of the other candidates.

And I bring that message of unity to you today. In our place in the community of nations, I have always said that the Philippines shall continue to be a friend to all, an enemy to none.

I will reiterate what I said during the inauguration; we will continue to be a good neighbor — always finding ways to collaborate with the end goal of mutually beneficial outcomes.

If we agree, we will cooperate and we will work together. If we differ, we will negotiate until we reach an agreement.

At the United Nations General Assembly, I spoke about the importance of dialogue and solidarity in the face of the many challenges and threats that we now have to deal with. This means exerting every possible effort to transcend our differences and commit to end conflict. We are compelled to do this despite the increasing geopolitical tensions and aggressive strategic competition that is transforming the global landscape.

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The United States certainly plays an important leadership role in fostering an environment of stability and peace, not just globally, but certainly, in our region. We appreciate the recognition by the United States of the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific area and its long-standing alliance with the Philippines in this regard.

The special relationship between our two countries is indisputable, founded on a long history of diplomatic relations and historical and cultural linkages that existed before that formal linkage --- that formal partnership between the United States and the Philippines.

The United States, after all, is our only treaty ally. We believe that our alliance is an important basis for substantial and sustainable Philippine-U.S. cooperation, in support of the Philippines' security and socio-economic development agenda.

On the security front, we seek collaboration to effectively implement the framework of defense agreements while enabling the meaningful modernization of our armed forces and civilian law enforcement capabilities.

As I clearly stated in my State of the Nation Address, I will not preside over any process that will abandon even a square inch of territory of the Republic of the Philippines to any foreign power. [applause]

We know that we can count on the United States to uphold the international law-based order, freedom of navigation and overflight, and the sustainable use and development of maritime resources.

But equally important, we look to the United States to promote peace, security, and prosperity. On our part, we will continue to work with China and other claimant states with the end in view of resolving the issues involving the West Philippine Sea through diplomacy and through dialogue.

The Philippines' candidature for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for the term of 2027 to 2028 is premised on my country's long years of experience in building peace and forging new paths of cooperation.

In this context, we are certainly concerned about rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait, just north of the Philippines. We urge all parties involved to exercise maximum restraint, dialogue and diplomacy must prevail. We adhere to the One China Policy and have consistently called for the peaceful resolution of their issues involving Taiwan.

We understand that peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region are also linked to the situation in the Korean Peninsula.

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And we are ready to play a constructive role in advancing a peaceful and denuclearized Korean Peninsula through confidence-building measures amongst various stakeholders.

On Russia and Ukraine — the Philippines urges all parties to continue adopting a peaceful means to maintain international peace and security. The Philippines has voted in favor of the three UN General Assembly Resolutions on Ukraine.

And at this point, let me discuss the various dialogue mechanisms in the region. We will continue to work toward strengthening ASEAN, particularly its dialogue partnerships with neighbors that uphold regional peace and security.

We welcome the renewed engagement of the Quad, along with the recent establishment of the AUKUS. These mechanisms should help prevent destabilizing actions in the region that go against international law. We think that these dialogue mechanisms and security arrangements should complement — not supplant — the ASEAN centered regional security architecture that has been built over decades by the ASEAN and its member partners, as well as the existing network of bilateral security partnerships in the region.

Now let me touch on the economic front.

The US remains a strategic trading and investment partner of the Philippines. American businesses, including Fortune 500 companies, have found a home in the Philippines. They recognize the Philippines as our country for its business-friendly policies; a very competent workforce; and a network of economic zones.

Let me to point out three reasons why the Philippines is a viable and smart investment destination.

First, our macroeconomic strength and bright prospects. The Philippine economy expanded by 5.7 percent last year and by 7.8 percent in the first half of this year. Growth was broad-based, driven not only by government spending but also by household consumption and investments, reinforced by consumer and business confidence.

Second, we have enabling policies in place. Recently, investor-friendly laws were enacted, and my administration is determined to leverage these changing reforms that will enhance those efforts.

Third, and perhaps the most important point, another strong asset that we have is our human capital.

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We boast of a young, educated, hardworking, and English-speaking workforce that is among the best in the world.

With a very young median age of only 25.7 years old, the Philippines enjoys a demographic advantage from which investors can benefit.

We would welcome capital investments from the US. And our priority sectors are agriculture; clean energy, particularly nuclear energy; health systems; information technology and business process management or IT-BPM; digital connectivity; and manufacturing, including the critical sectors of semiconductors, green metals, batteries for the electric vehicles and electric vehicles themselves.

The Philippines looks forward to how the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework will support our efforts to promote resilient supply chains, health systems, infrastructure, as well as clean energy and decarbonization. These pillars are consistent with the shared priorities as outlined in the Joint Vision Statement for a 21st Century United States-Philippines Partnership that was adopted last November.

We hope for the re-authorization of the Generalized System of Preferences or GSP program, which will greatly benefit both our countries. The GSP has long been a win-win program for the United States and its development partners, including of course, the Philippines.

These are interesting times and there are many things to accomplish. The far-reaching ill-effects of the pandemic compel us to reinvigorate our economies in a spirit of sustained cooperation and collaboration. We must use public and private resources effectively to encourage the expansion of trade, investment, technology transfers all to accelerate our development.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic and the global economic crisis, the Philippines remains on track to graduate to upper middle-income-country status by next year. With steady investments in infrastructure, agriculture, food security, public health, education, and other social services, we seek to become a high-income country, with zero extreme poverty, by the year 2040.

The same spirit of solidarity and cooperation that animates our relations with foreign partners will also advance our efforts to address climate change. We must enhance our collective capacity to urgently and decisively respond to this existential threat that not only the Philippines but the entire world is facing.

Certainly, the world continues to be faced by enormous challenges, but I am

confident in the future because I have 110 million reasons for being so.
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Such is my faith in the Filipino people and the relationship we hold with the United States and our other allies and partners and friends.

With the continuing support of our only treaty ally, we know we can make a better future happen.

Thank you and good afternoon. [applause]

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