

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND MARCOS JR.’s  
QUESTION AND ANSWER AT THE PRESIDENT’S NIGHT WITH THE  
MANILA OVERSEAS PRESS CLUB  
Sofitel Philippine Plaza in Pasay City  
October 5, 2022**

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FRANCISCO “KIT” TATAD: Mr. President.

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND MARCOS JR.:** Good evening, good evening, Senator.

MR. TATAD: Thank you very much, Tony.

Mr. President, in deference to the Chairman of the MOPC, I tried to write down my question too.

Mr. President, first of all, may thank and congratulate MOPC through its chairman Mr. Tony Lopez for organizing this timely multi-sectoral forum. And may I say how honored and delighted we all are to listen to Your Excellency after your highly successful visits first to Indonesia and Singapore and then to the United States where you addressed the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly and met with US President Joe Biden, other foreign leaders and numerous American business and investment groups.

The UN General Debate was dominated by fierce denunciations of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and passionate calls for severe punishment of the offender. Your Excellency however made it abundantly clear that the Philippines will be a friend to all and an enemy to none, whether in this conflict or in any other. This is a universal aspiration rooted in the gospel, a stark reminder that war always destroys and peace alone delivers.

My question, Mr. President, is this: having defined the idea, will you now want to operationalize your exalted foreign policy vision so that the world would have a working model to follow? And if that opens up a diplomatic

corridor for several nations to cooperate with greater zeal for the alienation of war and the threat of war, would you be disposed to lead such an undertaking? At an appropriate time, will you want to take it up with say your colleagues in ASEAN and in the Non-Aligned Movement of which we have been a member since 1993?

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Once small related question, Mr. President, the UN Secretary-General recently said that so far humanity has been...

MOPC CHAIRMAN TONY LOPEZ: Kit, can you reduce your question to five words? [laughter] What exactly are you asking? What is your exact question?

MR. TATAD: Yeah, I've asked the first question.

Would His Excellency want to operationalize his exalted foreign policy vision so that the world will have a model to follow? And if that opens up a diplomatic corridor for many nations to work together to...

MR. LOPEZ: So you're asking the President if he wants to be the leader in peacemaking negotiations?

MR. TATAD: Yes.

**PRESIDENT MARCOS:** In regard to that, I believe that it is --- especially for the regional concerns that we have that it is not sufficient for one country or one leader or one head of state to lead the... There will be leaders, there will be followers and we hope to be part of leading --- the ones that are leading the effort for peace that we concentrate in the past... In my discussions with the different leaders, we spoke very much of course of the situation here in Southeast Asia, in Asia, in regards to the intensifying non-violent conflict but push and pull between China and the United States over Taiwan.

And again we were reminded two days ago of what we may have forgotten a little bit, that North Korea remains a threat to, well, to the peace in the region. And it is my belief that we must strengthen our organizations and specifically in this case I'm talking about ASEAN. And I think ASEAN can do more than it has done thus far.

And in fact in the upcoming ASEAN conferences that are coming up in November, I intend to propose several actions that ASEAN can take specific to the different conflicts that we are seeing in our region. And if

the Philippines can play a part, then that would certainly be a good thing.

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We have a question, the issue of Myanmar and the Rohingya --- the Rohingya situation and we have as yet been unable to bring Myanmar to the table. And I think it's time to put forward some concrete proposals on what we can do to at the very least bring the --- at least representatives of the military government to the table so we can begin to talk about these things. I'm a great believer in engagement. And I think once the lines of communications have closed, then any hope of a compromise has ended. And so let us continue with that.

But again we must present a united front and that is something that I believe is the best way forward, simply because the moral suasion at the very least of several member countries of ASEAN is probably in many ways more effective than just a single country. Although we don't dismiss bilateral contacts, bilateral negotiations, multilateral negotiations outside of ASEAN, within ASEAN.

Again, I think we should continue to try and push our member neighbors to present that united front and to move that united front forward so that we can say that ASEAN as a political --- geopolitical aggrupation, economic aggrupation, has certainly shown that it has a function to do in the normal scheme of the geopolitics. But when crisis comes, that they come to the fore.

And that again is something wherein I believe the Philippines can play a large part. In fact, in my speech in the United Nations I already proposed and I said that it would be --- we need to abandon the idea of nuclear weapons of having a stockpile of nuclear weapons as a deterrence. And we should remove that kind of cold war thinking already from our geopolitics and remove and lessen, lower the stockpiles of --- and make them... And finally to at some point, to remove from the face of the earth any nuclear weapons.

And unfortunately, two, three days later, we hear the announcement from Russia that they are considering, contemplating using tactical nuclear weapons. This brings us back immediately to the problem with North Korea because North Korea is the only country in the region who has threatened the use of nuclear weapons. And if Russia uses nuclear --- tactical nuclear --- hindi na bale 'yung strategic nuclear weapons --- but if they use tactical nuclear weapons in the Ukraine and it becomes acceptable, the tactical nuclear weapons are --- a conventional weapon, then that might encourage other nuclear powers to think in that

direction and to now actually use the unthinkable, start using their nuclear stockpiles.

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So we have a very important part to play in that because we have a great interest. It must be a subject of central concern in our foreign policy and in the defense of the nation in the Philippines. So I do not think we have a choice. We must play a leadership role because it is in our interest. And if we do not do it, we are not doing our jobs as the protectors of our country, of our state, of our territory, of our people, if we do not take that leadership role.

I think it has been thrust upon us. And as good Filipinos, we face up to challenges and we face up to responsibilities so we will face up to this one as well.

MR. TATAD: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

MR. LOPEZ: [cross talk] By the way Mr. President, when they say tactical nuclear weapon that's a bomb greater than Hiroshima or Nagasaki and it's only tactical.

Next question from Ivan Mayrina... Thank you very much my friend and kumpadre, Kit. [applause]

IVAN MAYRINA (GMA-7): Magandang gabi po Ginoong Pangulo. Good evening to everyone. Ako po si Ivan Mayrina of GMA-7.

Mr. President, you will mark your 100<sup>th</sup> day in office in two days. What would you consider your accomplishments? What are the things that you wish you could have done? And what will you do, if any, what will you do differently?

**PRESIDENT MARCOS:** Well, I would say that I don't know if I would myself term them as accomplishments, it's very early on in a term. But nonetheless I think what we have managed to do in the first 100 days is put together a government which is functional and which has a very, very good idea of what we are targeting in terms of strict economic targets. For example, in terms of the numbers of growth, the numbers of the different measures, the different metrics that we are using for the economy.

But beyond that I think that we still continue to enjoy the unifying force that the elections became. Generally speaking, elections are polarizing.

And of course even in this case it was polarizing, but at least a very strong majority made itself felt. And I think that is something that we continue to use as our foundation.

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And with that, what the promises that were made during the campaign, for example, that we bring the best and the brightest and we do not look at color in terms of --- political color, I think we have done that. And more importantly, we have galvanized government once again into governing and to we... The one thing I worry about very, very much is coasting. Yung, "Okay na ito, puwede na ito. You don't really need to attend to this anymore. It's going to be alright, you know. You can all go and have a holiday." That's what I worry about the most.

But we have so --- I try very hard to put an impetus into government. "Come on, let's go. We need to do these things. We haven't very much time. We have very many difficulties. We cannot count on other countries to help us in ways that they used to be able to help us so it is up to us."

But I think all of those, at least in the higher positions in government and even slowly it's filtering down to the rank and file are beginning to feel that no, there is a point to government, there is something that we need to be doing and this is what --- this is the direction we are being led in. These are the things that we are going to do. We are going to go from here to there. This is why we are doing it and this is how we are going to get it done. And this is the part that you will have to play if we are going to succeed.

That kind of message I think has filtered down to not only the elected officials, not only the high officials in government, but to slowly make the bureaucracy understand, make all our officials understand that we are here --- as a government we are here to govern. We have been put here to try our best to pull us out of this terrible crisis that we have just been suffering for the last two years. And I think we have achieved that.

So it is that sense of urgency, that sense of... Again, it is that unity that we bring people together and we are bringing people together for a reason and the reason is not ourselves, it's not our families, but it's our community, it's our country, it's our people. That I think we have returned into government. I think that's the most important thing.

On a more practical level, I believe that the engagements that we have had with ASEAN countries such as Indonesia and Singapore and then eventually our contacts that we renewed... And the nice thing is the

Philippines has many friends around the world and these contacts and friendships we have been able to renew.

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But I think since this is the coming-out party for the world, it's not just the Philippines that's coming out of the pandemic. This is the coming-out party for the Philippines and we are able to explain, this is what the Philippines is now. This is what the Philippines looks like after two and a half years of crisis. This is what the Philippines is doing and this is how we can help each other because not any one country is going to manage this transformation by themselves and we will need each other's help.

The interconnectivity of the global economy was brought home very, very --- in a very convincing way by the war in Ukraine. Even in the UN, I would talk to the other leaders and I say, "Who would have thought that the war in Eastern Europe would affect the Philippines halfway around the world in the gut --- in the food supply, fertilizer prices, seedling prices, fuel?" All of these things. You never imagine that such a thing would happen but here it is and here we are.

And so it was very, very important for us to find our place now in the world and to define that place and to explain that to the rest of the world, especially our friends but also those who have not been considered as particularly close partners or allies. But we have been able to show that the Philippines is standing on its feet. The Philippines continues to have its aspirations and its dreams and we are willing to do our part in making those dreams come true. And partnerships once again are going to be important and we invite you to join us. So that is one thing we have staked our place in the community of nations. I think that has been very, very important.

The other I suppose we have started --- we were able I suppose in the first 100 days, actually the first 60 days maybe, 50 days, we were putting out fires. We were just trying to make things work because suddenly the problem --- and you're all aware the problem with sugar supply, the problem with fertilizer. We were having to look to different --- what we now refer to as non-traditional sources.

Senator Kit just brought up also this foreign policy between Ukraine and Russia. And again, we take a very balanced view because the truth of the matter is we may have to deal with Russia for fuel, for fertilizer. We have to find a way to deal with Ukraine for our feed wheat, our corn importation --- all of these things --- our livestock importation. All of these things have now become part of the mix that has made really ---

has made the world situation more volatile and more complex than it was before.

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But we have, again, we have already made it clear where the Philippines stands in all of this. And it is something that I made clear again to the other leaders and I said that essentially we are driven by our desire for peace. And all the economic development that we plan and all that we hope to do will come to naught unless there is peace. And so that I think that message and we have played our part in that --- that touches upon the question of Senator Kit Tatad about the leadership role that we need to be playing.

So again, I think we have... I remember the first time I heard this question was before --- was during the campaign: "What will you do in your first 100 days?" And I said, "Well the first 100 days will be finding the best and the brightest to help and to serve in government." I think that we have managed to do that. I think that we have...

I am always very grateful to those such as Secretary Ben Diokno, for those in our economic managers, those who are experts who have decided to join the government. Because we know that they are very successful and this is a sacrifice for them. It is really all about service on their part. And so we are always very grateful for their talent. We are grateful for their industry and to have them in place already I think gives us a very distinct advantage as we try to transform our economy for the next few years.

MR. LOPEZ:

Mr. President, ang haba na ng istorya ni Ivan.

Anyway, Ivan, if I were to write this story and allow me to suggest it. Just remember two things: unity and engagement. This is the first president to personify the meaning of unity. Unity means nationhood. Engagement is like in an automobile, there is a transmission, there's an engine, there's a driver, you engage and you move.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

**PRESIDENT MARCOS:**  
inyo. [applause]

Thank you, Tony. Maraming salamat sa

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