

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.'s
REMARKS DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY
OF THE ASEAN-EU COMMEMORATIVE SUMMIT
Brussels, Belgium
December 14, 2022**

[00:00:03]

Your Majesty; Your Excellencies; President Michel; EU Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen.

After 45 years of enduring partnership, there is still much that can be achieved between the two organizations that we have. Given the breadth of potential cooperation between our regions and countries, I would like to enumerate three priorities:

One: I look forward to closer maritime cooperation between our blocs based on the intersection of priority areas between the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, underpinned by ASEAN Centrality. Beyond declaring respect and support for UNCLOS as the legal framework that governs all activities in the oceans and seas, we need to see an effective application of the UNCLOS to address the maritime disputes and geopolitical rivalry in the Indo-Pacific to truly realize the still distant aspiration for the Indo-Pacific to become a sea of peace and prosperity for us all.

Two: I look forward to closer economic cooperation both on our bilateral and bloc-to-bloc relations. At this time of economic recovery from the ravages caused by the pandemic and the current threats on the supply chain, I hope to see the proposed Philippine-EU Free Trade Agreement move beyond scoping negotiations soon. With the entry into force of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership amongst Asia-Pacific countries, the European Union misses out on the benefit of having a similar agreement with ASEAN.

We encourage the EU to calibrate the scope and coverage of its proposed FTA to what is currently possible for ASEAN to collectively agree on so we can make concrete progress on the negotiations on the ASEAN-EU FTA. Likewise, I look forward to closer cooperation and to the continued implementation of the PH-EU Partnership Cooperation Agreement for the benefit of our peoples.

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And third: The world must get together to fight the effects of climate change and to ensure sustainable development. Climate change threatens to radically transform for the worse many vulnerable ASEAN landscapes. It is a race against time to conserve and prevent habitat and biodiversity loss.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, which is based in the Philippines and manages the preservation of all fifty-one ASEAN Heritage Parks dotted all over the region which represents ASEAN's diverse ecosystems, needs as much support as it can get. I encourage the EU and its Member States to continue extending cooperation activities and support for the ACB. We are currently losing huge chunks of our natural resources at a rate difficult to repair and impossible to replenish in our lifetime.

The ACB's work is vital in preserving and growing ASEAN's rich national heritage which serves as a main pillar of our culture and our economy. As coordinator of the ASEAN-EU Dialogue on GreenTech and Innovation Mapping until 2024, the Philippines will vigorously pursue collaboration and coordination with the EU to meet the dialogue's aim of facilitating green technology transfer and cooperation between our regions.

At the bilateral level, I express my appreciation for the launch earlier this year of the EU-funded National Copernicus Capacity Support Action Program for the Philippines which will help us develop and apply space technologies to increase our resilience to natural disasters and climate change.

There is no problem like climate change that is so global in nature that it requires immediate and united effort. We need to act now. We need to act together. We need to get it right.

Thank you and good afternoon. [applause]

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