

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR's.
REMARKS AT THE APEC CEO SUMMIT**

San Francisco, California
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With the distinguished panel, I am pleased to join all of you this morning as I commend our host, chair and organizers --- the U.S., ABAC U.S., and NCAPEC --- for holding this APEC CEO Summit at such a critical time for our region. Our resolve to gather today is already testament to our commitment to improve the lives of the people of our region. We meet at a challenging time when bleak forecasts loom over the progress we have made since the pandemic.

As member economies of APEC, we are accountable to our people and future generations to deliver sustained growth and prosperity and while signs point to darker clouds. This opportunity to collaborate once more is light in the economic horizon in our efforts to pre-empt a prolonged downturn and its very negative consequences.

My biggest learning from the Covid-19 pandemic is that it disproportionately affected our already disadvantaged, marginalized and underrepresented sectors.

What this ensuing recovery period should teach us is how to address the cracks and lacks in our policies and systems and what the challenges of today, including food, energy security, digital and green transformation and certainly climate change action present an opportunity to do this right to ensure that no one is left behind in the pursuit of our economic and financial goals.

The economic model and international trading system that has worked for us for decades and have, even for the APEC region alone, resulted in heightened economic growth and lifted millions and millions out of poverty, these are now getting undermined by criticisms due to apparent and exacerbating gaps.

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Strengthening the system that has led to our cooperation and development must entail addressing the core issues and areas for improvement which are, from the perspective of the Philippines and most if not all of our economies, distributing wealth and welfare effects more effectively and equitably to ensure that our economies develop in a manner that is resilient, sustainable and mitigates negative externalities.

These are of paramount importance because we can only be as strong as the weakest members of our economies, of our societies. Regardless of how much progress we make in these halls, if such does not translate to a better quality of life, about resiliency for all, we will remain derailed by even the most subtle of shocks and insecurities that are beyond our control.

But equally important is the recognition of the key roles and contributions these groups have made in our transition and will make in our continuing transition. They do not only provide the most important voice in terms of the bare minimum that we should be according, but also knowledge, skills and talent so far untapped or underutilized in our efforts, especially toward the circular economy, environmental preservation and protection, utilizing indigenous sources and nature-based solutions and adopting sustainable practices.

Disadvantaged groups should also be capacitated and empowered to assist and align with our strategies to ensure bandwagon support for sustainability and an expeditious and decisive push essential in the carving of a collectively beneficial path forward. Cognizant that our priorities, our strategies and approaches differ, platforms such as the APEC prove instrumental in finding policy congruences and coordination of our efforts.

I see five elements that are critical to this. First, our table must continue to expand to accommodate seats to represent all our people and the U.S. hosting of APEC this year has expertly demonstrated how this should be done through stakeholder engagements, policy dialogues and expert consultations.

But as decision-makers, ours is the role to take heed and constructively discuss how to stitch our differing contexts together and multi-directional approaches, so they move as one.

For the Philippines, a just energy transition will focus not only on workers and communities that will be affected by geography-based and socio-economic strategies, but also on the large segment of micro, small and

medium enterprises that make up 99.5% of our businesses and that continue to rely on dependable, accessible and affordable energy.

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The nuances in our push are also informed by the needs of vulnerable segments of our population, including those who do essential work in the functioning of our supply chains such as maritime and healthcare workers, whom we owe the assurance of international equity in a sustainable transition of their respective industries.

Second, the partnership of our governments with stakeholders, especially the business sector, must both broaden in scope and deepen in commitments. International equity calls for moving away from traditional mere shared financing to formulating frameworks and adopting models that will enable the mainstreaming of sustainable practices in an inclusive manner.

Examples include sharing of aggregated consumer data from industries to enable evidence-based and scalable public programs and projects; recalibration and standardization of reporting structures and assessment templates to take stock of our progress in an equitable and sustainable growth; and not least, collaboration on the development of environmental, social and governance, responsible business conduct and good regulatory practices and other partnership frameworks that will balance profit and prosperity with our accountability to the environment and our people and help ensure that not one group is adversely affected.

This administration's partnership with the Philippines' Private Sector Advisory Council forges a collaborative environment that more easily generates jobs and pursues future-ready, inclusive and sustainable industrialization.

Third, the race to sustainability comes with the risk of escalating protectionism. As economies embrace new technologies, temptations abound to push for one's own profit from the development of these technologies or to discriminate imports from those deemed non-compliant to environmental standards. Those have deleterious effects to not only our supply chains, but will also further exclude our people, especially our small-scale producers, suppliers and exporters, from participating in global value chains and thereby, limiting their participation in the production and distribution of products and services that facilitate our sustainable transition.

Developing economies and our people are most at risk of such alienation. Instead, we must intensify capacity building, economic cooperation and technical assistance, knowledge and data sharing among our economies

so that each is empowered and provided with the tools toward sustainable development, while creating complementarities in our economies and further opportunities for trade and investment.

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Fourth, markets should be left to operate as optimally as we can, but where they fail, government needs to intervene and economic reforms should be used to increase the effectiveness of provision of services, redistribute benefits aimed at reducing inequalities and increasing living standards and strengthening our economic foundations to resist shocks and crises and further stimulate growth.

The Philippine Development Plan through 2028 induces the economic and social transformation of our economy to accelerate poverty reduction and reinvigorate job creation by steering it to a high-growth trajectory, including by maximizing opportunities in the green and digital economies, especially for our untapped sectors.

We have made much progress by universalizing and increasing access to many of our basic and social services throughout the years. This year alone, through the Philippines' Agrarian Emancipation Act, we have condoned more than 600,000 small farmers of loans amounting to more than one billion dollars.

This would allow the agricultural sector to develop, with farmers now having their own land, capacitated with profits and skills to assist in increasing productivity and modernizing the sector, while fueling sustainable rural development, themselves being the experts. This democratization of land and agriculture will not only strengthen and diversify our export market, but also, by building competition, help stave off protectionism.

Policy dialogues, especially those that promote inclusion should, therefore, remain an important tool in APEC to allow us to coordinate our efforts, learn from our individual experience and facilitate convergences in our economies that will narrow the income divide, while affording especially developing economies with some policy space to identify and to explore priorities that are specific to its context.

Finally, and probably the biggest challenge that we have is to increase the level of our ambition and enlarge the scope of our cooperation.

The issues that we face – supply chain shocks, food and energy insecurity, natural disasters, health emergencies and the climate crisis – demand that we augment our efforts to address, mitigate and pre-empt the negative economic impacts that they bring.

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Guiding us is the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 which, itself, recognizes that progress must be delivered not only in trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, but also in digitalization and innovation, and a strong, balanced, secure, inclusive and sustainable growth.

In this regard, let us not waver in both implementing actions and initiatives from our various agreements and partnerships and identifying areas for further collaboration in pursuit of equitable development, including by ensuring that each one is provided with opportunities to participate in the regional and global economy and made resilient from burgeoning shocks.

These are just a few ideas and we have a panel here to guide us with their expert insights on a clear and pragmatic way forward. We must leverage APEC's core value propositions as the premier regional forum in the Asia-Pacific, incubator of innovative ideas, pathfinder for collaborative solutions to emerging trade issues and platform for forward-looking and responsive economic and trade policies.

We must continue to build on APEC's partnership with the private sector and be more in sync with the APEC Business Advisory Council, and our other stakeholders. We must act regionally; we must also shrink our intentions globally by finding coherence in our work streams with those of other economies of the world and other regional and international organizations.

I wish to emphasize once more that global and regional economic governance platforms such as APEC are geared towards averting conflict because sustained prosperity and progress are only possible in a world that is at peace, which in turn must be a peace that is built on a solid economic foundation.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts and I wish you all a meaningful Summit.

Thank you! Mabuhay! [applause]

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