

## **JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE**

Prague, Czech Republic

March 14, 2024

[00:00:09]

**CZECH PRESIDENT PETR PAVEL:** Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to welcome you to Prague Castle on the occasion of the Press Conference, on the occasion of the state visit of His Excellency Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos, President of the Philippines. I'd like to ask the President to take the floor.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen; the distinguished Mr. President. I highly esteem that during your trip to Europe, Mr. President, apart from Germany, you also decided to visit the Czech Republic. It does not only prove of interest in the mutual cooperation but also it proves to the top quality of our mutual relations.

Last year, we actually commemorated 50 years of bilateral relations with the two countries --- between the two countries which however go further back into history.

Let me mention the --- our close bonds between our two countries. The friendship between Jose Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines and our teacher and scientist, Mr. Ferdinand Blumentritt. They were close friends indeed and it has until now been remembered by Jose Rizal [unclear] also the Czech National Bank in Prague. So, there is a lot to build on.

And I was happy during the discussions with the President and between the delegations to see the close standpoint of position not only on mutual cooperation but also the international law regardless of the long distance, geographical distance between our two countries.

We speak about many areas of potentially expanded cooperation in the future on both sides; there is strong will and determination to further expand the framework that is built on framework agreements and other documents.

Future meetings will continue during Mr. President's visit in the Czech Republic in Prague, but also in the future. Very soon our Minister of Agriculture shall visit the Philippines with a numerous delegation of our businessmen with specific, particular plans to offer.

We also have companies that are involved in defense industry, manufacturing, in farming and agriculture, science, technology, energy sector, power sector. Many of these businesses do have particular specific plans for the future cooperation with the Philippines come to part.

It does not only concern purchasing products but also technology transfer, technology cooperation, know-how, sharing, funding, all many innovative forms in order to facilitate the implementation of such projects in the nearest future.

And also, appreciate the signing of Joint Communiqué in the establishment of labor consultations mechanisms.

As we all know, the labor market in the Czech Republic suffers from shortage of workforce and the Philippines ranked among the top countries that send to us from where we have topped qualified, highly skilled workers.

I'm glad that the Philippines are interested in upskilling. We also worked on legal and the mechanisms that would facilitate the work of such workers in our country. And they also have to enjoy equal standing and protection of rights just like all others.

Let me say welcome, Mr. President, presidential visit and later also the Prime Minister and Chamber of Deputy said in the evening we shall meet again on the occasion of gala dinner. And I believe we shall cover other topics of mutual interest.

Thank you.

[00:04:45]

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.:** Thank you, Mr. President.

I wish to convey, first of all, my warm appreciation to His Excellency President Petr Pavel and the government of the Czech Republic for this very kind invitation for me to come to the state visit that we are here for today.

President Pavel and I had a very productive meeting this morning, discussing a range of topics, foremost being the ways in which the Philippines and the Czech Republic can strengthen our bilateral relationship and cooperation and our multilateral partnerships.

I am pleased to note that our countries have been enjoying warm and friendly relations for the past five decades. In fact, this visit of mine to the Czech Republic now, invigorates our ongoing celebration of the 50th anniversary of our diplomatic ties which was established in October of 1975. We are only just

beginning to appreciate the huge potential of our cooperation in various areas of mutual interest to our two countries.

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In my talks with the President, we explored various opportunities for future partnerships in trade and investment, agriculture, green economy and renewable energy, space and aerospace, education, tourism, defense, and cybersecurity, and of course labor, amongst others which manifest the hosts of many opportunities that we have to strengthen our partnership with the Czech Republic.

We discussed the potential in increasing the bilateral trade between our two countries.

I also highlighted to the President the Philippines' remarkable economic performance, making it an attractive destination for Czech investment in the areas of IT-BPM, in electronics, manufacturing, food and agriculture, and automotive / EV manufacturing, amongst others.

I am optimistic that we will be able to attract more Czech traders and investors to do business with the Philippines as a result of this increased engagement between our respective business sectors.

We look forward to the convening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Philippines-Czech Republic Joint Committee on Economic Cooperation in Manila that will occur later this year.

I took note of the Czech Republic's announcement that you have increased the quota for Filipino workers from 5,500 to almost double that from January 2024 to 10,300 per year starting in May of 2024.

Just before this press conference, President Pavel and I witnessed the signing of the Joint Communique to establish a labor consultations mechanism between the Philippine Department of Migrant Workers and the Czech Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

We shared with President Pavel the latest development on the West Philippine and South China Sea. And I understand that the Philippines' position on the South China Sea remains consistent and clear, and firmly anchored in the 92 UNCLOS.

While it is unfortunate that there are persistent incidents of aggression and harassment in the South China Sea, we continue to engage all our neighbors and stakeholders through diplomacy and dialogue.

I thank President Pavel for the Czech Republic's support as a like-minded partner, in upholding peace, stability and the rules-based international order.

I am very pleased to also reiterate my sincere appreciation to the government and the people of the Czech Republic for the warm welcome that you have accorded to myself, the First Lady and, of course, the rest of the Philippine delegation.

This state visit reaffirms the Philippines' commitment in further cultivating the bonds and friendship which the Czech Republic— and cementing the enduring ties between our countries and our people with a very special connection in terms of the time that our national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, spent here in Prague together with his friend, Ferdinand Blumentritt. And it is something that is very well appreciated by all Filipinos and it is something that provides us a foundation on which to build upon.

Thank you very much.

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[00:09:58]

**REPORTER:** Good afternoon, your Excellencies. My question is for both President Marcos and President Pavel. What kind of defense cooperation are we exploring to support the Philippines in defending international law particularly in the issue of the South China Sea?

**PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.:** Well, we discussed— first of all, we have based our discussions on the fact that the Czech Republic and the Philippines share the same values when it comes to the adherence to international law and that is something that, again, we find as a commonality between our two countries.

As we pointed out and continued to discuss, the Armed Forces of the Philippines is undergoing a modernization program.

And under that modernization program there will be a great deal of procurement that needs to be done, to modernize our forces and to modernize our capabilities.

And the Czech Republic has always been an important part of that development, of that evolution.

And we are hoping that that will continue, not only at its present level but at a higher level.

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**PRESIDENT PAVEL:** Let me add that the Czech Republic has had a long-lasting tradition when it comes to defense industry.

We have a lot to offer and [unclear] when it comes to aviation and land equipment and it will be the topic of future discussions, specifically what will be provided. But we also see possible cooperation in cybersecurity and in the use and development of high-tech or modern technologies. I believe that both our countries have a lot to offer and there is a lot of space or room for cooperation.

As for the South China Sea, we fully support the Philippines when it comes to their entitlement to free movement of goods and also marine transport because that's a principle that not only we all respect but which also secures global and regional stability.

And to us, the South China Sea may seem to be far, far away but if you take into account the percentage of share of world or global trade that passes through this area. Any disruption of these routes would have an adverse impact on Europe, not only in the form of shortage of goods but also soaring prices, which is why we have to pay attention to this topic.

**REPORTER:** [unclear] television. Mr. President, you have duly answered the question concerning the South China Sea therefore, the question is addressed to Mr. Marcos.

You have mentioned that you want to also approach the United States of America when it comes to the solution of the situation. At the beginning of next year you should meet Anthony Blinken, the foreign Secretary next week. So, what do you expect from that?

**PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.:** Well, it is really an ongoing process and that all of these discussions are really just— as far as the Philippines is concerned, it is concerned with the maintenance of peace in the South China Sea.

It is an issue that is not only important for those surrounding the region, the Indo-Pacific region, for ASEAN, and for the member states of ASEAN that surround the South China Sea. But also, because this is a safe navigation and passage of the South China Sea is important to international trade; as close to 60% of international trade goes to that channel and we hope to continue these discussions.

And with an eye not to winning any kind of conflict but really just to maintain the peace and to continue to defend the sovereignty and the sovereign rights of the Philippines when it comes to these international differences the we are having to deal with right now.

**PRESIDENT PAVEL:** ... to thank all of you for coming and I wish you the most enjoyable afternoon. Thank you and see you.

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