

JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE

President's Hall, Malacañan Palace
April 18, 2024

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PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.: Members of the New Zealand delegation; our friends in the media; ladies and gentlemen. Good evening.

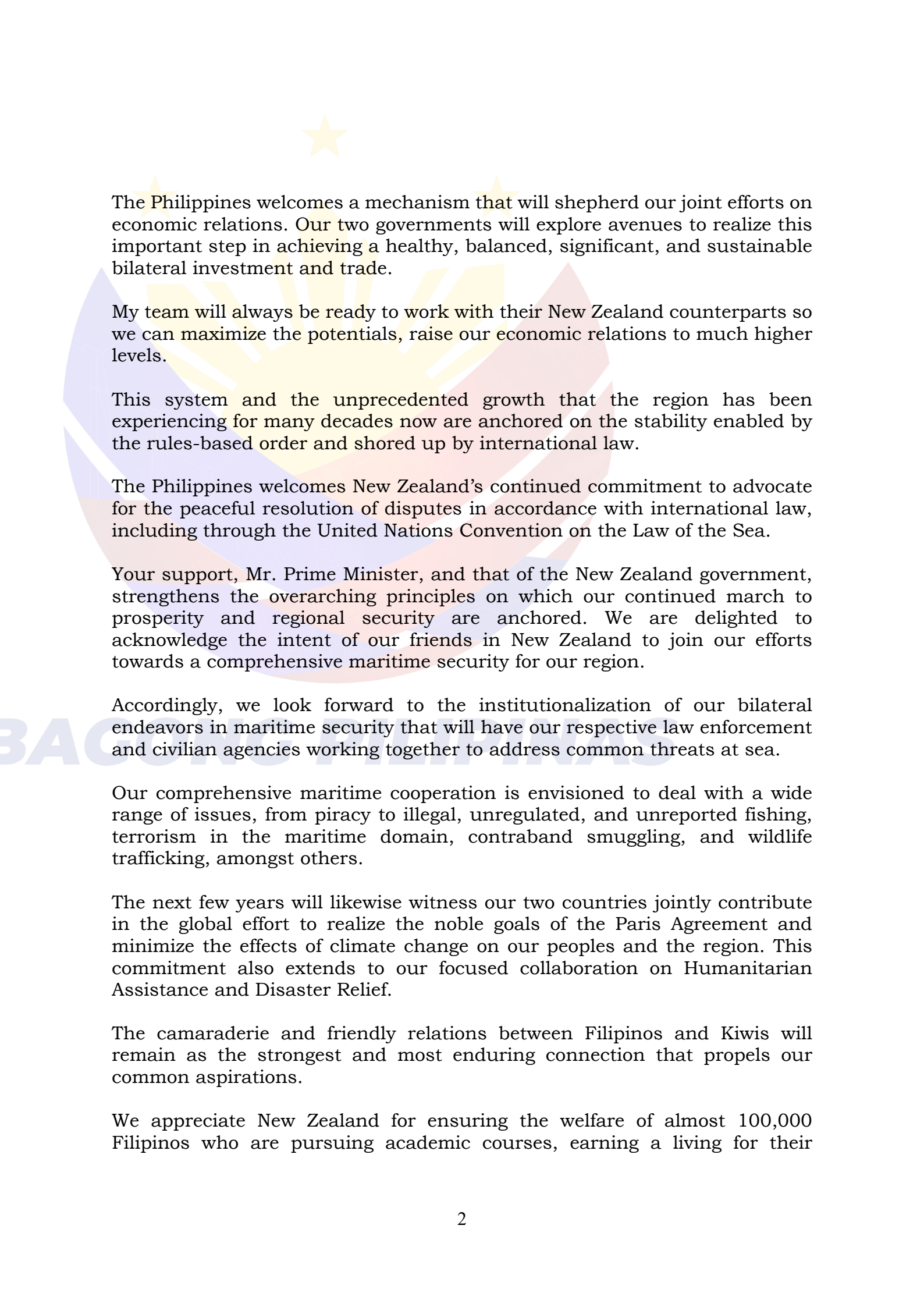
We marked today an important milestone in the friendship between the Philippines and New Zealand as we welcome Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and the New Zealand delegation to the Philippines.

Our interaction and engagement with New Zealand is guided by our shared Pacific heritage, our common experiences as maritime nations, and by our collective desire for peace, stability, and prosperity.

It is indeed a natural course for us to work towards enhancing our relations that will see the Philippines and New Zealand grow closer and cooperate more extensively on various areas, including trade, investment, defense, environment, climate change, maritime security, people-to-people linkages, and in multilateral endeavors. A very full list.

On the economic front, the Philippines will continue to partner with New Zealand in maximizing the benefits of the rules-based trading system as strengthened by international arrangements such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation or APEC, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership or RCEP, and the ASEAN Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area.

We will remain committed as fair and active stakeholders in this globalized and highly connected economic system, with the end goal of further realizing inclusive and sustainable development for our peoples.



The Philippines welcomes a mechanism that will shepherd our joint efforts on economic relations. Our two governments will explore avenues to realize this important step in achieving a healthy, balanced, significant, and sustainable bilateral investment and trade.

My team will always be ready to work with their New Zealand counterparts so we can maximize the potentials, raise our economic relations to much higher levels.

This system and the unprecedented growth that the region has been experiencing for many decades now are anchored on the stability enabled by the rules-based order and shored up by international law.

The Philippines welcomes New Zealand's continued commitment to advocate for the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, including through the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Your support, Mr. Prime Minister, and that of the New Zealand government, strengthens the overarching principles on which our continued march to prosperity and regional security are anchored. We are delighted to acknowledge the intent of our friends in New Zealand to join our efforts towards a comprehensive maritime security for our region.

Accordingly, we look forward to the institutionalization of our bilateral endeavors in maritime security that will have our respective law enforcement and civilian agencies working together to address common threats at sea.

Our comprehensive maritime cooperation is envisioned to deal with a wide range of issues, from piracy to illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, terrorism in the maritime domain, contraband smuggling, and wildlife trafficking, amongst others.

The next few years will likewise witness our two countries jointly contribute in the global effort to realize the noble goals of the Paris Agreement and minimize the effects of climate change on our peoples and the region. This commitment also extends to our focused collaboration on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

The camaraderie and friendly relations between Filipinos and Kiwis will remain as the strongest and most enduring connection that propels our common aspirations.

We appreciate New Zealand for ensuring the welfare of almost 100,000 Filipinos who are pursuing academic courses, earning a living for their

families, and achieving their dreams while positively contributing to the economies and societies of both our two countries.

As Prime Minister Luxon himself has been able to personally see and admire the beauty and wonders of our country many times over, we wish that the next few years will see us welcoming a greater number of New Zealand nationals as well, to visit, to explore, and to learn to love the Philippines.

As we set our sights on the celebration of the 60th anniversary of bilateral relations in 2026, Prime Minister Luxon and I have agreed to continue working together in a steadfast manner and united in the vision of an elevated and more meaningful relationship between our two nations.

Our strong commitments are identified clearly in the Joint Statement, to be released after this Press Conference.

Thank you very much. And good evening to you all.

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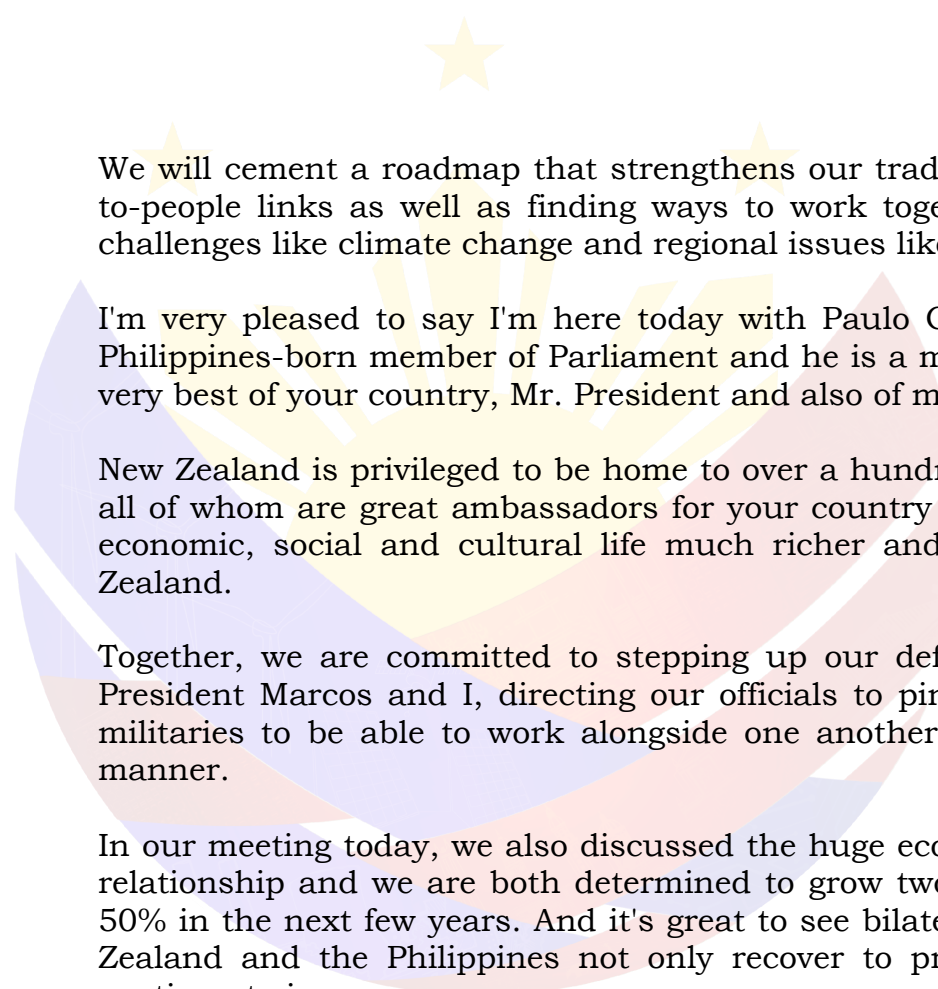
PRIME MINISTER CHRISTOPHER LUXON: Thank you very much.

Well, President Marcos, can I say again, thank you very much for the very warm welcome that you've extended to myself but also to our whole team. You are an exceptional host and I have to say it is a tremendous privilege to be able to stay at your mansion as your guest this evening and thank you very much for arranging that for us.

I've had many visits to the Philippines and it's a country that you know that I have come to know and love for its vibrancy, for its energy and for your amazing hospitality. Yours is also the fastest growing economy in Southeast Asia, a young country that is assuming an ever-larger role as a leader in our region and a place driving prosperity.

And while the Philippines and New Zealand share a warm and enduring relationship, President Marcos and I are determined to elevate it to a new level, determined to bring a new energy and new vibrancy to the work that we do together.

And that's why we have agreed that the Philippines-New Zealand relationship will become a comprehensive partnership which we will sign by the time of our 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2026.



We will cement a roadmap that strengthens our trade, security and people-to-people links as well as finding ways to work together to address global challenges like climate change and regional issues like maritime security.

I'm very pleased to say I'm here today with Paulo Garcia. He is our first Philippines-born member of Parliament and he is a man who represents the very best of your country, Mr. President and also of mine.

New Zealand is privileged to be home to over a hundred thousand Filipinos, all of whom are great ambassadors for your country and all of whom make economic, social and cultural life much richer and more vibrant in New Zealand.

Together, we are committed to stepping up our defense relationship with President Marcos and I, directing our officials to pinnings in place for our militaries to be able to work alongside one another in a more frictionless manner.

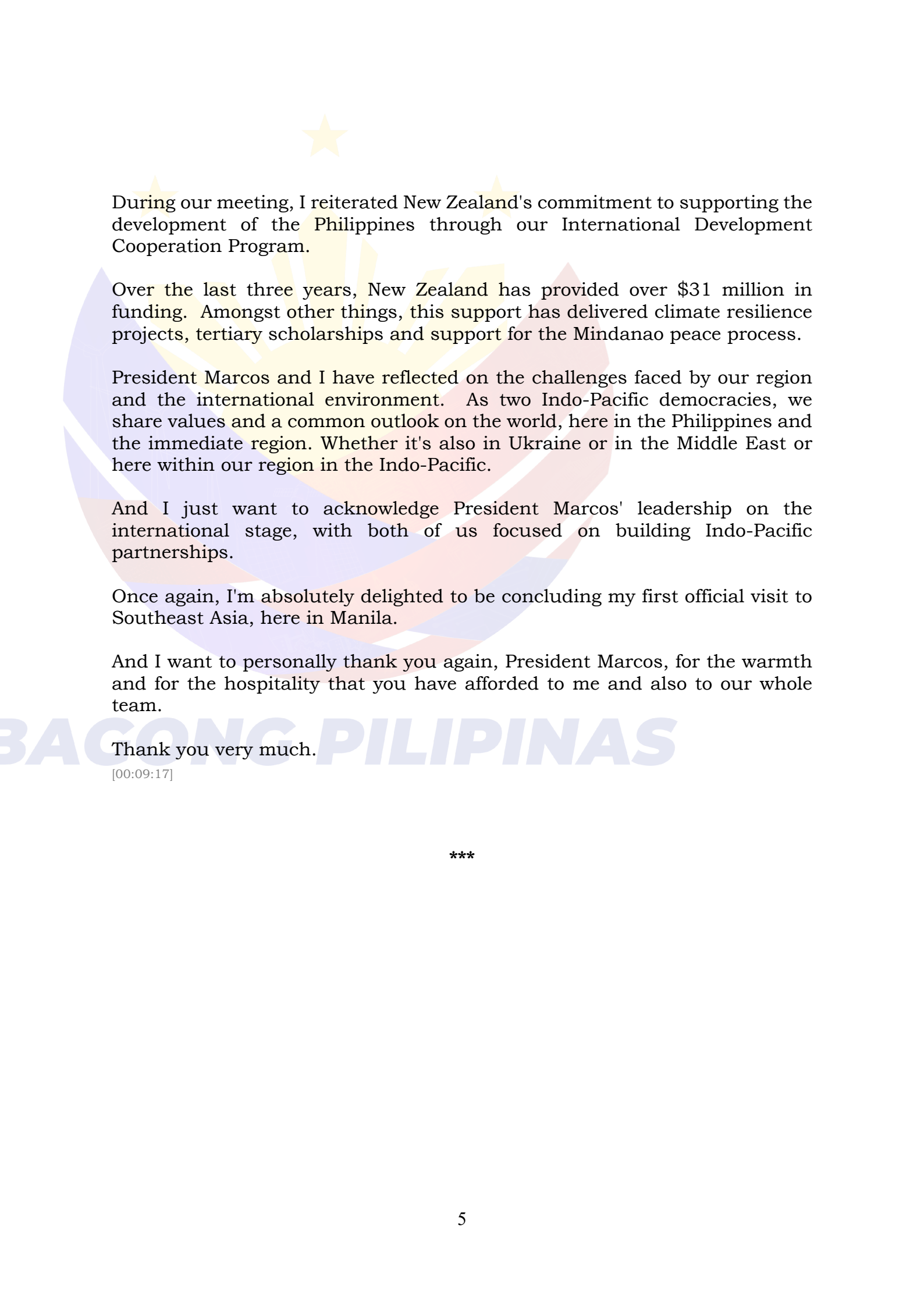
In our meeting today, we also discussed the huge economic potential in our relationship and we are both determined to grow two-way trade by at least 50% in the next few years. And it's great to see bilateral trade between New Zealand and the Philippines not only recover to pre-pandemic levels but continue to increase.

And while dairy remains New Zealand's biggest export commodity to the Philippines, there is an increasing interest from New Zealand companies in the information and technology sectors, manufacturing, renewable energy and food and beverage sectors, looking up to set up new offices in the Philippines.

Travel has of course been a major driver for our trade growth and we have more people moving back and forth between our two countries to visit family and friends, to take up work and study opportunities and to holiday in our beautiful countries.

We want to do more to grow both of our country's tourism industries. And as I said earlier, our strong and growing people-to-people connections are really what is at the heart of our relationship.

The Philippines and New Zealand have been working closely to improve understanding of each other's qualification systems to deepen the understanding of our respective education systems and better support labor mobility.



During our meeting, I reiterated New Zealand's commitment to supporting the development of the Philippines through our International Development Cooperation Program.

Over the last three years, New Zealand has provided over \$31 million in funding. Amongst other things, this support has delivered climate resilience projects, tertiary scholarships and support for the Mindanao peace process.

President Marcos and I have reflected on the challenges faced by our region and the international environment. As two Indo-Pacific democracies, we share values and a common outlook on the world, here in the Philippines and the immediate region. Whether it's also in Ukraine or in the Middle East or here within our region in the Indo-Pacific.

And I just want to acknowledge President Marcos' leadership on the international stage, with both of us focused on building Indo-Pacific partnerships.

Once again, I'm absolutely delighted to be concluding my first official visit to Southeast Asia, here in Manila.

And I want to personally thank you again, President Marcos, for the warmth and for the hospitality that you have afforded to me and also to our whole team.

Thank you very much.

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