

PHILIPPINES-NEW ZEALAND BILATERAL MEETING

State Dining Room, Malacañan Palace

April 18, 2024

(00:00:00)

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.: Good afternoon. I am pleased to welcome today Prime Minister Christopher Luxon to the Philippines for his first Official Visit, following our brief yet really quite constructive conversation at the sidelines of the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit in Melbourne last month.

Prime Minister Luxon is no stranger to our country. As you have visited our country many times as part of your work in the private sector.

I think it's also useful to point out that one of the first stops that the Prime Minister made was to Jollibee. [laughter] Which immediately qualifies you as an honorary Filipino.

Now, you're back in Manila, as part of the maiden engagement in Southeast Asia, and I sincerely hope that you will enjoy your stay and work with us towards elevating the level of friendship and cooperation between our two countries.

We established our formal diplomatic relations in 1966, and since then we have pursued cooperation on matters of mutual interest, resulting in 30 bilateral agreements in the fields of defense, development, agriculture, education, energy, labor, food security, visa, environment and trade amongst others.

Throughout the decades, we have remained committed to this friendship through a trade relationship with immense untapped potential, a strong commitment to international law, and a robust people-to-people tie.

These enhanced our deep connections that have already rooted in our common Austronesian heritage and our shared realities as archipelagic and maritime nations.

As fellow Pacific states, we also share the challenges and the risks of climate change and the sea level rise, as well as natural hazards such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. No single country can manage the effects of these phenomena alone. And this is a call for greater collaboration on this regard.

So, as mature democracies and responsible States, both our countries uphold similar values, including our shared respect for international law, such as the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. And respecting and upholding the rule of law is a matter of concern not only for the Philippines and New Zealand but absolutely, certainly, the rest of the international community as well.

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Underscoring our Pacific friendship is the strong people-to-people connection between the Philippines and the Kiwis. The 100,000 Filipinos in New Zealand continued to contribute immensely to both our countries' economies and our societies.

So, I take this opportunity to emphasize the intent of the Philippines to continue working with New Zealand on promoting regional peace and security, and in safeguarding the rule of law under the framework of international law.

Let's make sure that this visit be a signal of a re-energized bilateral relationship between the Philippines and New Zealand that will see us enhance our existing cooperation and expand further on areas of great potential amidst an ever-changing regional, global landscape.

Thank you very much. And once again, welcome to the Palace, welcome to the Philippines.

I am very happy to welcome you, to see the fruits of our—I supposed they call pull asides, I pulled you aside from the [inaudible].

So, thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister.

(00:04:09)

PRIME MINISTER CHRISTOPHER LUXON: Well Mr. President, can I just say how delightful it is to be with you again and I just want to say thank you. My wife, Amanda, and I have so enjoyed getting to have a quick conversation with you and First Lady Lisa and we liked you immediately; and

so it is so good that we've been able to come here and after such a quick period of time actually and bring our delegations together.

But I think as relatively new leaders wanting to breathe new life into the Philippines-New Zealand relationship, it's a good time for us to come together and talk about the things that are important to both of us. Obviously, you know, for New Zealand, we are deeply committed to re-energizing our relationships across Southeast Asia.

For the Philippines in particular, we look at this market and this country and we think it's a fantastic future that you have; 110 million people, a fast-growing economy, young talented people inside the Philippines with huge potential. And so the ability and that's how I feel about that we have a great future and a great potential as well.

So, we are really looking forward to, you know, talking with you further about how we deepen our relationship. We have a lot in common, we stand up for international rules-based systems, we believe in the freedom of navigation, we're outward looking trading nations that want to do well for our people in the world. Our interests are mutually together I think in many ways economically and security wise as well.

So, can I just say again thank you to you and all of your team for your generous hospitality. We're looking forward to spending time with you this afternoon and getting into some of the issues and the topics of potential greater levels of collaboration between us.

But again, thank you so much for hosting us so generously at your place. And I think you're an outstanding tour guide as you explained the Palace history to me and also, yes, it's okay if the dinner tonight doesn't have Jollibee. [laughter] I've had my fix for the day.

So thank you very much.

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.
(00:05:54)