

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH AT THE SEATRADE CRUISE ASIA 2024 WELCOME RECEPTION**

Okada Manila, Parañaque City
November 11, 2024

[00:00:01]

Thank you, Secretary Christina Garcia-Frasco for your kind intro... – please take your seats – for your very kind introduction.

The Fifth District of Cebu and Deputy Speaker Duke Frasco; the First District Parañaque City Representative Edwin Olivarez; the Bureau of Immigration Commissioner Anthony Viado; Parañaque City Mayor and our host Mayor Eric Olivarez; Seatrade Cruise Group Director Mary Bond, thank you so much for your very kind words; our Seatrade Cruise partners; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen. Good evening.

It is our greatest pleasure and honor to host this esteemed occasion, and I warmly welcome each of you to our shores. As we gather for the Seatrade Cruise Asia 2024, we are presented with an opportunity to shape the future of cruise tourism in a way that brings a lasting benefit to all.

The Philippines, in collaboration with our regional partners, is committed to playing a constructive role in this evolving industry. We are focused on strengthening infrastructure, forging meaningful partnerships, and ensuring that both the cruise industry and local communities will flourish.

Our efforts go beyond improving ports and destinations; we are also working to preserve the cultural and environmental assets that make us distinctive. Our goal is to build an industry that benefits everyone: the cruise lines and

its crew members, the local communities and the travelers who seek to explore the rich diversity of our cultures.

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By streamlining operations, enhancing efficiencies and focusing on sustainable practices, we aim to ensure that the cruise industry grows in a way that is both practical and inclusive.

The Philippines has long been a gateway to the rich history and culture of Southeast Asia. Now, with your collaboration and commitment, we establish ourselves as a hub for cruise tourism—a destination where innovation, collaboration, and sustainable growth converge. With 40 unique destinations welcoming cruise ships, from the coasts of Palawan to the streets of Manila, we offer experiences that echo beyond the shores and resonate with every traveler.

Last year, we took pride at being recognized as Asia's Best Cruise Destination and as well at the World Cruise Awards. And as well this year, we are recognized as the Best Port of Call at the Asia Cruise Awards. These accolades are affirmations of our collective vision—one shared by the Department of Tourism, the Philippine Ports Authority and our local communities—to elevate the Philippines as a premier cruise destination worthy of global recognition.

In line with our National Tourism Development Plan 2023-2028, we have worked diligently to modernize our ports, to enhance guest experiences and streamline entry processes. The recently launched Cruise Visa Waiver Program is just one example of how we are transforming our policies to welcome visitors with open arms and with open doors.

In 2023, the Philippines welcomed 125 cruise calls across more than 30 destinations, a testament to the increasing confidence of the industry in our capabilities. To date, we anticipate 109 calls for 2024, with other confirmed schedules extending to 2027.

Yet, numbers alone do not tell the full story. What truly matters is the promise behind those numbers—the promise that each ship docking here brings a wave of opportunities for local economies, for artisans, for communities. The journey ahead will require all of us to work very hard together, with dedication, foresight, and with purpose.

As we continue to move forward with the same vision and determination that have brought us here today, I have no doubt that the Philippines will succeed in the global cruise tourism industry.

Our goal does not end at welcoming more ships; we aim to create meaningful, lasting connections between travelers and our country. We strive for each cruise call to be a chance for passengers to step into our story, taste the richness of our cuisine, dance to the rhythms of our traditions, and carry beautiful memories of the Philippines back with them—memories that linger long after the journey ends.

To the distinguished representatives of cruise lines, esteemed industry leaders, and valued partners, the Philippines extends a warm and earnest invitation to you to deepen our partnerships—founded on the principles of shared success and mutual aspiration. This is an opportunity to forge stronger alliances, exchange insights, construct enduring connections that will transcend borders and continue to benefit our industries for years to come.

May your participation in the Seatrade Cruise Asia 2024 be productive and enriching, and may the collaborations we foster here today chart a transformative course for our region's cruise industry.

On behalf of the Filipino people, I extend a heartfelt welcome, and I accompany it with our expressions of deep gratitude.

Thank you very much. And may your conference – may this meeting be a very successful one.

Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas! [applause]

[00:06:31]

BAGONG PILIPINAS