

Presidential Communications Operations Office

Presidential News Desk

**PRE-DEPARTURE BRIEFING OF
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR THE OFFICE OF ASEAN AFFAIRS
JUNEVER M. MAHILUM-WEST**

AND

**CHIEF OF PRESIDENTIAL PROTOCOL AND PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT
ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS ROBERT BORJE**

**ON PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE 35TH ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN)
SUMMIT AND RELATED SUMMITS IN THAILAND**

[New Executive Building, Malacañan Palace, Manila | 28 October 2019]

OPENING STATEMENT:

ASEC. MAHILUM-WEST: Good morning to everyone. Maayong buntag sa tanan. Ladies and gentlemen of the press.

I am pleased today to provide an overview of the President's participation in the 35th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits which will be held on 02 to 04 November 2019 in Nonthaburi, Thailand.

The President will be leaving Manila for Bangkok on certain dates and I would defer to the Office of the President to disclose to you the dates. And then the 35th ASEAN Summit will be attended by the Heads of Governments and States of the ASEAN member states as well as Heads of Governments and States of its Dialogue Partners.

The President will be accompanied by the Secretaries of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Industry and other Cabinet members, and again to give a

definitive list of the Cabinet line-up, we defer to the Office of the President on that.

Apart from the ASEAN Plenary Summit, there are several other summits where Philippine participation is expected. These include the ASEAN Plus Three Summit and the East Asia Summit where leaders are expected to share their views regarding regional and international issues affecting our region and beyond.

ASEAN will also have one-on-one summits with China, with India, the United Nations, the United States and Japan where we are expected to discuss the current direction of our partnerships and cooperation on mutual concerns.

There are about 40 anticipated outcome documents at the end of the 35th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits which represent the culmination of the ASEAN Community's work in pursuit of a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable ASEAN Community particularly given this year's theme of "Partnership for Sustainability."

There will be a handover ceremony from --- of the Chairmanship of ASEAN from Thailand to Vietnam at the Closing Session on November 12.

I will just give you a list of the engagement on the President's calendar. This will start with the 35th ASEAN Summit Plenary on November 02 and then that's a Saturday.

And then Sunday, November 03, has a full schedule. We have the Opening Ceremony followed by the ASEAN-China Summit, and then the ASEAN-India Summit. And then in the afternoon, we have the ASEAN-United Nations Summit to be followed by the Gala Dinner.

On Monday, November 04, we have the ASEAN Plus Three Summit that means the 10 member states of ASEAN plus China, Japan and Korea, followed by the ASEAN-US Summit. And then this is an initiative of Thailand as Chair, Special Lunch on Sustainable Development.

In the afternoon, we have the 14th East Asia Summit to be followed by the ASEAN-Japan Summit and then the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Summit or RCEP.

So Monday, November 04, the Closing Ceremony will be held towards the evening, to be followed by a Press Conference. And then late in the evening, we will have the Mekong-Japan Summit Working Dinner.

There are two major side events during the summit which are the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit and also the --- I've already mentioned the Mekong-Japan Summit Working Dinner and the third one is the Indo-Pacific Business Forum.

So that's all and we are ready to answer your questions if you have any.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Reymund Tinaza (Bombo Radyo): Kay Asec. Mahilum-West, ma'am, good morning. Still...

ASEC. MAHILUM-WEST: Good morning.

Mr. Tinaza: As we speak, meron na bang sched ng bilateral meeting of the President with any of the 10 ASEAN Leaders or from Dialogue Partners?

ASEC. MAHILUM-WEST: Meron na hong inaayos at hindi lang ho limited sa Southeast Asia but other countries as well kasi may Dialogue Partners tayo mag-participate.

But since hindi pa ho na-firm up, hindi muna namin i-announce. But there is a team from the Asia Pacific Affairs Office of DFA that will take charge of all bilateral meetings.

Mr. Tinaza: Can we speculate China? *[laughter]*

ASEC. MAHILUM-WEST: I'm instructed not to speculate kasi eh. Yeah. *[laughter]* We prefer that we give you really firmed up arrangements.

Mr. Tinaza: Still the undying issue eh 'no, 'yung during the ASEAN-China meeting, will there be any discussion on the still unresolved Code of Conduct in the South China Sea?

ASEC. MAHILUM-WEST: I think it will be featured in the discussions. It's unavoidable. Kasi doon sa meeting na 'yun ng mga leaders, they will have a parang tour of the horizon of what's happening throughout the region.

So in all three pillars of cooperation: political security, economic, and then socio-cultural. So it will be discussed there and then I think we could expect the countries to give their positions.

But as to intensive negotiations, we don't expect that will happen in this meeting --- in these kinds of meetings.

Mr. Tinaza: Thank you, ma'am.

Ina Andolong (CNN Philippines): To Asec again. Just a follow up on that. Since the President himself has directly told China to fast track the drafting of the COC, can we perhaps expect him in this forum to call on other nations to back him up on that?

ASEC. MAHILUM-WEST: I wouldn't want to preempt what the President would say. But in terms of looking at the conditions, the situation on the ground or at sea in the South China Sea, for example, I think the President would be expected to say something about it.

Hannah Jane Sancho (SMNI): Hi, sir, ma'am, good morning. Na-mention na po natin, sir, sino po magiging part ng delegation who will attend together with President Duterte sa ASEAN Summit po?

ASEC. MAHILUM-WEST: I think we would defer to the Office of the President on that matter.

CHIEF OF PRESIDENTIAL PROTOCOL BORJE: Thank you very much, ma'am. We're firming up the final Philippine delegation.

But for ASEAN Meetings, the President is expected to bring with him the depart --- the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, the Secretary of Trade and Industry, and the Secretary of Social Work and Development because these are the three pillars of ASEAN.

As for other members of the Cabinet, we're still firming up again based on the agenda items and the talking points of the President.

Mr. Tinaza: Follow up lang kay Secretary Borje. Sir, who will be joining the President, is it Madame Honeylet or Mayor Sara Duterte?

CHIEF OF PRESIDENTIAL PROTOCOL BORJE: Madame Cielito Avanceña will be joining the President. There will be a Spouses Program and she will be joining the Spouses Program.

Mr. Tinaza: Thank you, sir.

Ms. Sancho: Sir, kasi noong mga previous summit, other engagements ni PRRD with ASEAN and even APEC na nagsi-skip po siya. Now that earlier, may reported na he's not feeling well, 'di ba? Will there be any possibilities na baka may ma-miss siyang meeting po? And if possible po, who will represent PRRD po in case hindi po siya maka-attend?

CHIEF OF PRESIDENTIAL PROTOCOL BORJE: Thank you. Maraming salamat sa katanungan.

As of this point, we are prepared for all of the meetings. And we are under the assumption --- working under the assumption that the President will be attending.

And if he's going to miss any of the meetings, then appropriate guidance will be given to us and then a representative will be tasked. Normally, if the President is unable to attend a meeting, it's the Secretary of Foreign Affairs who attends.

But as of this time, the information that we have and the guidance that we have is the President will be joining the meetings.

Maraming salamat po.

ASEC. MAHILUM-WEST: Maraming salamat.

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