

**Presidential Communications Operations Office
News and Information Bureau**

**PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON AND CHIEF PRESIDENTIAL LEGAL COUNSEL
SECRETARY SALVADOR PANELO IN NONTHABURI, THAILAND
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MODERATOR: Presidential Spokesperson Secretary Salvador Panelo, to discuss about the participation of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte during the Summit or meetings today.
Sec! Good afternoon Sec!

SEC. PANELO: Good afternoon ladies and gentleman! I'm ready for any question coming from you.

MS. EDITH: [off mic]

SEC. PANELO: Yes, I think so. He is well, he has participated in every event –there is nothing wrong with him.

MS. EDITH: Okay.

SEC. PANELO: Except for he's travel weary.

MS. EDITH: Okay.

SEC. PANELO: Except for that.

MS. EDITH: Sir, what do you think has this ASEAN Summit achieved for the Philippines this time?

SEC. PANELO: Well, the way I see it, all the ASEAN countries have one thing in common: First, all of them want to unite against common enemies and they are all in one to cooperate in the same concern. The common enemy of course, is terrorism and then the problem in the South China Sea and with respect to the fear on the trade war which is not... instead of getting better I think, it's getting worse. All of them are saying that they have to do something about it and they are united.

More particularly I think, from what I observed, they are very concerned on what is happening in the South China Sea that is why all countries have asked everyone to observe self-restraint to avoid any activity that could lead to more friction and even armed hostilities between and among countries in the region.

MS. EDITH: But the ASEAN has given China until, a timeline about three years, for both parties to come up with a conclusive Code of Conduct, within three years?

SEC. PANELO: Well, it can be earlier. But most of them say that they are very appreciative that there's no first reading of the Code of Conduct. They want an effective and substantive Code of Conduct that will provide regional stability, as well as peace.

MODERATOR: Thank you Ms. Edith; next question? Gen Kabiling of Manila Bulletin.

GENALYN KABILING/MANILA BULLETIN: Hello, sir! Sir, did the President actually confront Chinese Premier Li Keqiang about China's incursions in to the West Philippine Sea? Did he ask China to stop their activities in the —

SEC. PANELO: During the — No.

MEDIA: [off mic] (unclear)

SEC. PANELO: No.

GENALYN KABILING/MANILA BULLETIN: Did he raise the arbitral ruling during the ASEAN – China Summit?

SEC. PANELO: No. What he said was- the usual policy that the President has been saying all along: That every country must be rules-based. Meaning, we will have to respect international, we have to respect the UNCLOS. We cannot be forcing others to succumb to another country's power. In other words, we should be treating each other equally and fairly.

GENALYN KABILING/MANILA BULLETIN: Sir, what was the reaction of the Chinese Premier to the President's call to practice self-restraint in the disputed region?

SEC. PANELO: Well, I think the Chinese Premier is in accord. He gives the same rules-based recognition of international law.

SEC. PANELO Yes, ma'am!

AFP: Can you give us any update on how the RCEP negotiations are going-on?

SEC. PANELO: How do I — what?

AFP: RCEP negotiations. Do you have any insight on what are some of the sticking points or which members are still have outstanding concerns?

SEC. PANELO: With respect to?

AFP: The RCEP, trade negotiations for the RCEP deal?

SEC. PANELO: No, I'm not privy to that.

AFP: Okay.

RADIO FREE ASIA: Yes. My name is [foreign name], I'm working for Radio Free Asia. Tomorrow you're gonna meet the US counterpart. What do you have to say about the South China Sea —

SEC. PANELO: What was that again? I can't hear.

RADIO FREE ASIA: Tomorrow you are going to meet the US counterpart and do you have anything specific to talk to the US tomorrow during the ASEAN – US Summit?

SEC. PANELO: What do we expect?

RADIO FREE ASIA: Yeah, what do you expect to talk to, I mean as far as the South China Sea is concerned?

SEC. PANELO: I do not know the agenda but I suppose we will be sticking to our policy, our position that we will not be a pawn to any powerful country. We will stick to our policy that that part of the region specifically the areas of where the arbitral ruling said ours, will remain ours regardless of whatever they do.

PHILIP/BLOOMBERG: Hi. Do you think you can elaborate a little bit about actual practicality of the Code of the Conduct? What it will actually achieve? How will it achieve, you know...and—if you can just elaborate on that, that'll be great?

SEC. PANELO: First, I think countries are appreciative that China is open to a Code of Conduct. You must remember that China believes that the entire seas around it are theirs. Hence, they want to control it. The fact alone that it's opening itself to have a Code of Conduct where you will be observing certain rules that will be useful in preventing conflicts is good enough as far as I'm concerned – like, there should be innocent passage, there should be freedom of navigation and flying over the seas – that alone I think, should tell us that even if China claims to be the owner, invoking historical rights, the fact is...I think, it recognizes the fact that if it does not agree to a Code of Conduct, then there will be turmoil in this region. There will be conflicts, there will be fighting. And I don't think China would want that.

PHILIP/BLOOMBERG: May I follow-up with one more?

SEC. PANELO: Yes.

PHILIP/BLOOMBERG: You mentioned not being a pawned to any particular country. Duterte's statement earlier kind of show the same thing that they should've not to choose between the US and China specifically. I wonder if those statements were triggered by a particular incident or if you could perhaps elaborate on how the US or China might be pushing countries one way or the other?

SEC. PANELO: Well, I do not know exactly what the US want in this part of the region. While it's trying to contain the movement of China, with respect to navigation, I cannot even understand, like what the President said: When they were starting to build structures there they did not stop China and it's only now that they're doing it but it's too late.

AKIHIKO/MANILA SHIMBUN: Good afternoon, sir!

SEC. PANELO: Good afternoon!

AKIHIKO: On South China Sea issue. Could you share with us the reaction of Vietnam during the discussion, if you could?

SEC. PANELO: As I said earlier, all of them are in accord that there should be rules to follow, that the UNCLOS should be observed, that there should be restraint on those countries surrounding the region. I think, every country would want to have a peaceful and stabilized region, for obvious reason –it's for everybody's interest.

AKIHIKO: Sir, one more thing. So, next year, the chairmanship will be handed out to Vietnam. What do you expect the chairmanship of Vietnam would affect the discussion of the South China Sea issue?

SEC. PANELO: That would be highly speculative on my part. I don't think I would go into that.

AKIHIKO: Thank you.

MARLENE ALCAIDE/TV5: Hi, sir! May specific po ba na sinabi si Pangulong Duterte kanina doon sa ASEAN Summit, with China for example, na gusto niyang isama doon sa COC, for example, iyong sa maiwasan iyong mga standoff?

SEC. PANELO: Hindi. As I've said earlier, pare-pareho ang sinasabi nila kanina eh. Kailangan palaging mayroong rules, to-observe mo iyong UNCLOS, kailangan ia-avoid lahat ng mga galaw, mga activities that will trigger any conflict or aggravate present conflict. Wala naman siyang specific na sinasabi.

MARLENE ALCAIDE/TV5: Thank you, sir.

BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR: Sir, may we know the official Palace reaction to the newest incident in the Scarborough Shoal, the Green Aura incident, sir, the alleged harassment of the Green Aura, sir?

SEC. PANELO: Are you referring to the captain of that ship?

BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR: Yes, sir.

SEC. PANELO: I understand from Foreign Secretary Locsin, it's not a Filipino ship. It's a foreign vessel, only manned by a Filipino captain.

BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR: Yes, it's a Liberian ship sir, hindi daw Filipino.

SEC. PANELO: Yeah.

BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR: But, sir, Secretary Lorenzana said in a statement that the Chinese Government must respect international maritime laws if it wants to earn the respect of the international community. Do you agree with his statements, sir?

SEC. PANELO: I agree, I agree. And I think, China should agree because China itself says that we should respect international law.

BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR: Okay. So, since this incident is not considered as an affront to the country's sovereignty, we will not file a diplomatic protest in this incident?

SEC. PANELO: In a way, it's not our concern, because it's not a Philippine vessel.

BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR: Okay. So, that has been verified sir, final statement from the national government that it's not something—it's not an insult to the country's sovereignty?

SEC. PANELO: It's not a Philippine vessel.

BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR: Okay. Thank you, sir.

EDITH REGALADO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Sir, I just would like to ask you about what's happening in the Philippines right now because there is an order by Lorenzana being the one in charge of the relief distribution for the quake. That he came out with a memo asking for accreditation of all those donors and all those—it's a tedious and long process to be... you know, mag-aano ka pa... accredit and everything and the situation is this: The victims need help ASAP. So, is Malacañang going to do something about this? Maybe amend the memo that Lorenzana came up with? Because it is asking basically each of those donors to pass through the checkpoints and everything but... My God! It's a big area that has been devastated by the series of earthquakes.

SEC. PANELO: I think Secretary Lorenzana has only order the process in mind but we will —

EDITH REGALADO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Will Malacañang look into it?

SEC. PANELO: We'll try to see what we can do. But I suppose those who would want to help, to donate, we should not stop them. We can — perhaps there should be a procedure by which what Secretary Lorenzana would want, can be achieved without derailing or preventing or stopping people who want to help and other countries.

EDITH REGALADO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Who should we call as legitimate donors and who should we call as illegitimate donors?

SEC. PANELO: I cannot understand why there should be an illegitimate donor. When you donate something then you are welcome.

EDITH REGALADO/PHILIPPINE STAR: But that's not the way Lorenzana make it sound.

SEC. PANELO: No, I think, what the Secretary wants is that there should be order and specifically or especially because he is the one accountable for the donations. You must remember he is the Chief, so he have to account for all these.

EDITH REGALADO/PHILIPPINE STAR: But accountability and order could be done by the donors reporting to the local government units itself, saying that they're going to donate this much and then define of white out the areas they could give out the donation or the aid not necessarily asking them to... you know? Could it be done that way?

SEC. PANELO: We will forward your suggestion to Secretary Lorenzana. I think that can still be streamlined.

EDITH REGALADO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Yeah.

SEC. PANELO: Everything is possible.

EDITH REGALADO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Thank you, sir.

JHESSET ENANO/PDI: Sir, good afternoon!

SEC. PANELO: Good afternoon!

JHESSET ENANO/PDI: Sir, if you would allow me to go back to the Green Aura issue lang po ano.

SEC. PANELO: What?

JHESSET ENANO/PDI: To the Green Aura issue?

SEC. PANELO: Green hour?

JHESSET ENANO/PDI: Green Aura, the tanker sir that was manned by our Filipino crew.

SEC. PANELO: Aura?

JHESSET ENANO/PDI: Aura, yes sir! Sir, because I was reading the transcript of the conversation between the supposed Chinese Coast Guard and that Filipino captain and the Chinese Coast Guard allegedly said that—or told the vessel crew that they are under—moving within the jurisdiction of the Chinese Government but they are within area of Scarborough Shoal. And we understand sir that we consider Scarborough Shoal as part of our national territory since it is within our EEZ. On that note, sir even if we're considering that it's not a Filipino vessel, do we still see it as a matter of concern for the Philippines considering that the Chinese ship is alleging that it is part of their jurisdiction?

SEC. PANELO: Well, for as long as they do not touch the Philippine ship or vessel, it would be the concern of that country that carries the flag of that particular vessel.

JHESSET ENANO/PDI: Sir, but we do not see this marring or having any impact on the talks, on the negotiations of the Code of Conduct, sir?

SEC. PANELO: Whether what?

JHESSET ENANO/PDI: We don't see this affecting anyway the negotiations on the Code of Conduct, sir?

SEC. PANELO: I don't think so.

JHESSET ENANO/PDI: Thank you po.

MARLENE ALCAIDE/TV5: Hi, sir! Pahabol lang po na tanong. Sir, iyong other matter naman po. Iyong nangyari lang po kagabi na pagbibigay ng jersey kay Pangulong Duterte kasi ginawan ng issue online. Your—

SEC. PANELO: I already issued a statement on that.

MARLENE ALCAIDE/TV5: Yes, sir.

SEC. PANELO: Apparently, the —Mister obnoxious political opposition will not stop at anything. Every opportunity presented to it, it will use to put the President in a bad light. But no matter what they do every time they throw mud at this President the more acceptable this President becomes. The more appreciated by the people of what he does. So, they can always keep on trying and keep on failing as I call them they are incorrigible whiners and nitpickers – but we're used to that.

JIM GOMEZ/AP: Sir good afternoon, what does ASEAN or particularly the Philippines think of the fact that President Trump is not attending this summit, when it's the highest level, broadest, most important of several ASEAN meetings this year?

SEC. PANELO: Well, we all know for a fact that Mr. Trump is trying to survive there, there is an impeachment going on – process. So, maybe that's the reason why he did not come. But it doesn't mean that he is not concerned with what is happening in this region.

JIM GOMEZ/AP: The Reed Bank incident last June was quite jarring - 22 Filipinos nearly lost their lives. Did the Philippines push for the inclusion of that incident in the communiqué that the ASEAN leaders would issue later today? Did the President raise this incident during the ASEAN-China meeting?

SEC. PANELO: That was not raised there, but I will leave that to the foreign secretary.

PHILIP/BLOOMBERG: It has been a theme in the last couple of days about unifying ASEAN in a way that would leverage the region towards international forums – speaking with one voice. It seems to me, what the South China Sea issue that various countries of ASEAN are certainly not that. So, I wonder, you know, again with Vietnam taking the chairmanship next year. Do you believe that the region will eventually come to speak with one voice on the South China Sea issue, whether they care each—all the ten countries would be able to come together and then have a shared perspective on the issue?

SEC. PANELO: I think so. Eventually, all the countries will have one voice. The way they sound today, all of them are in accord, that they should be united, that they should cooperate with each other for their own sake.

PHILIP/BLOOMBERG: I guess, what I mean is you know, a country like Cambodia wouldn't allow for a joint statement on the matter few years back – will there ever be a time when ASEAN as a body would be able to do such a thing?

SEC. PANELO: Remember there was a common statement read by President Duterte, and all of them say the same thing. If there's a common statement that means everyone agreed to whatever remarks that the President of our country crafted.

VIVIENNE GULIA/ABS-CBN: I would like to ask, 'cause I read earlier from statement from PND that the President raised the militarization of South China Sea during the ASEAN-China Summit earlier today and also called for self-restraint, how did China react to that?

SEC. PANELO: Again, as I already responded to that, the same policy that he has—or it has repeatedly said many times over that it respects international law, it respects the UNCLOS – it's the same.

VIVIENNE GULIA/ABS-CBN: How did China react to that?

SEC. PANELO: If you mean reacting – making a statement?

VIVIENNE GULIA/ABS-CBN: Yes.

SEC. PANELO: It did not.

VIVIENNE GULIA/ABS-CBN: It didn't make a statement. Did the President also raise the arbitral ruling during the summit?

SEC. PANELO: No.

IAN CRUZ/GMA: Sir, regarding the series of earthquakes in the Philippines - are we going to receive more foreign aids, especially from ASEAN countries?

SEC. PANELO: Everytime there is a calamity, countries as a practice, help. So, hopefully we will be receiving more aids from other countries.

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