

**Presidential Communications Operations Office
Presidential News Desk**

**STATEMENT OF PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE AT THE AQABA
PROCESS VIRTUAL MEETING ON COVID-19 RESPONSE**

[02 September 2020]

His Majesty King Abdullah II,

Excellencies,

Good afternoon.

We face the greatest challenge of our time – one that is truly global in reach and unprecedented in consequences.

No country – big or small, rich or poor – has been spared by the COVID-19 pandemic. For the first time, all of humanity fear the exact same invisible menace. Not even the Second World War had this most sweeping effect.

Our urgent common response was to close down borders and impose limits to mobility and trade. The repercussions, as we are seeing now, are grim and far-reaching. We have economies in recession, institutions in crisis, and societies in state of uncertainty.

As insecurity rises, the fear of the “Other” and the unknown heightens. This brings out man’s darkest tendencies to look inward and go it alone.

But the path to recovery requires more openness, deeper solidarity, and stronger cooperation among nations.

I thank His Majesty King Abdullah II for this timely Aqaba Process meeting. With this initiative, Jordan chooses partnership over self-defeating isolation. And so do all of us joining today.

Excellencies, even as we are navigating ourselves out of this pandemic, the Philippines continues to confront security threats.

Indeed, COVID-19 has not quarantined terrorists.

Local terrorist groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, and the New People's Army of the Communist Party of the Philippines have been emboldened: They exploit the situation to serve their nefarious activities.

But let us be clear about this: Religion has nothing to do with terrorism.

All faiths - Islam included - teach us to love not hate; to build peace not destroy; and, to celebrate our common humanity and not trample on it with senseless and ruthless violence.

Now, more than ever, our resolve is stronger: We will not let up in our fight against terrorism. And we will not allow COVID-19 to bring our people to their knees.

Admittedly, we face monumental challenges under present circumstances.

The path before us is clear: We will enhance cooperation with ASEAN, the United Nations and other international partners like Jordan.

I take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude to His Majesty for the generous assistance that will help us enhance our Air Force's capacity to combat security threats, including terrorism.

Narrowing deep-seated inequalities was challenging in times of economic growth. It is more so now when the global economy, ours included, has slumped. Resources are shrinking, while inequities are worsening.

Reviving the economy is, therefore, vital.

Economic self-sufficiency may seem a logical response to the supply chain disruption we saw at the start of the pandemic. It may sound rational to those who perceive themselves to be on the losing end of globalization. But economic independence is not the answer. It is a mirage. It seems like a real solution, but it is in fact an impossible proposition.

The key to shared prosperity is the free movement of goods, capital, and services, complemented with appropriate social safety nets. This is why we in ASEAN are drawing up a comprehensive recovery plan anchored on strengthening economic cooperation and supply chain connectivity.

We will build on existing platforms to ensure unimpeded trade in the region. We will work towards more regulatory coherence to promote ASEAN as an investment and trade hub. We will expand the digital economy to boost

growth and create employment. And we will harness technology to allow businesses - especially MSMEs - access to regional and global supply chains.

More than 80% of global trade is carried out by the shipping industry. With almost every other vessel plying the world's oceans and seas manned by Filipino seafarers, the Philippines plays a key role.

My Government worked with the International Maritime Organization on the issuance of a "Green Lanes" circular which provides for safe crew changes during the pandemic. This is our concrete contribution to ensuring that the global trade of raw materials and goods flows uninterrupted.

Excellencies, the COVID-19 pandemic compels us to break with the past. Insisting on the old ways that have perpetuated inequalities within and between nations is simply untenable.

Let us seize this historic opportunity to build a new order: one that is more secure, just, and humane – where there is no room for the barbarity of terrorists and extremist forces.

And one that is fair, equal, and sustainable – where progress and prosperity are enjoyed by all.

Let us, therefore, honor those who have fallen to the invisible enemy that is the pandemic and the scourge of terrorism. Let us commit ourselves to enduring partnership and cooperation. For indeed, together, we shall prevail. Thank you.

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