

**Presidential Communications Operations Office  
Presidential News Desk**

**INTERVENTION OF  
PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE  
AT THE 2ND ASEAN-AUSTRALIA BIENNIAL SUMMIT  
[Malago Clubhouse, Malacañang Park, Manila | 14 November 2020]**

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Your Majesty, Excellencies,

The World Bank estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic will push an additional 150 million into extreme poverty by 2021.

This is a dramatic reversal of individual and collective nations' efforts to lift people out of poverty and a grave concern for all. With more people --- poor --- and it is projected to become poorer, existing economic --- socio-economic inequalities and security challenges across Asia Pacific are expected to worsen.

Our duty as governments, therefore, is clear: We must redouble our collective efforts to address extreme poverty. We must accelerate our nation's and the region's socio-economic recovery.

First, we need to reinvigorate our trade and economic ties.

The ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement provide key frameworks that will allow a more buoyant bounce back to our economies.

Yet, we need to acknowledge that the pandemic has changed the way we do business.

Science, innovation, and technology, however, can provide direction and open pathways for the economies to recover and successfully transition to the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

We must intensify cooperation in this area.

We strongly support gender-sensitive initiatives that recognize the role of women in post-pandemic recovery efforts. The economic and social imperatives for these are clear: Empowered women support economic growth and resilience.

I thank Australia for helping make maternal and neonatal health services more possible and accessible in our province of Masbate, under the Philippine-Australia Comprehensive Partnership.

Third, we need to better prepare the region for future pandemics.

Let us build the capacity of our health systems. Let us optimize the ASEAN-Australia Health Security partnership. Let us also address illegal wildlife trade to prevent outbreaks.

Fourth, we must maintain peace, security and stability for quick and sustainable recovery to take place.

We must not let up in our collective efforts to combat terrorism and transnational crimes. We must continue working together to deter terrorist fighters. We must address the root causes of violent extremism and radicalization.

I thank Australia's [technical] assistance in the crafting of the Philippines' Anti-Terrorist --- Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020.

We must also ramp [up] our long-standing cooperation in law enforcement, immigration and customs matters.

We continue to fight against these deplorable threats to our societies: Illicit drugs, online child exploitation and abuse, human trafficking, and cybercrimes.

As ASEAN Voluntary Lead Shepherd for trafficking in persons, the Philippines calls for a greater ASEAN-Australia collaboration on the capacity-building in combatting human trafficking in the region.

Your Majesty, Excellencies,

The [ASEAN-Australia] strategic partnership is anchored on our shared interest for a peaceful and prosperous Asia Pacific, where international law and the rights of states are respected and upheld.

We welcome Australia's strong commitment to ASEAN Centrality and the principles of openness, inclusivity, respect for international law, and peaceful settlement of disputes.

Maintaining peace, security and stability in the South China Sea is a shared strategic objective. We can do this only if --- together --- we uphold the primacy of law over brute force.

Prime Minister Morrison, thank you for Australia's consistent support for 2016 Arbitral Ruling on the South China Sea.

I thank you for your kind words on my statement at the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly on this matter.

Your Government's formal manifestation before the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf reinforces our efforts to counter claims and assertive actions [that] contradict international law, particularly UNCLOS.

These formal manifestations are of utmost significance to the integrity of the Convention and the procedures it has established. The growing chorus of nations affirming and defending what is right strengthens the legal order over our seas and oceans.

Your Majesty, Excellencies: Where others see challenges, we see opportunities. The ASEAN-Australia strategic partnership is rightly used as a force of good. With this, I see no other way before us but a path of comprehensive recovery.

Thank you.

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