

**Presidential Communications Operations Office
Presidential News Desk**

**INTERVENTION OF PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE
AT THE 24th ASEAN-CHINA SUMMIT**

[26 October 2021]

I welcome His Excellency Premier Li Keqiang to the 24th ASEAN-China Summit.

Your Majesty, Excellencies, we face complex and simultaneous challenges: a pandemic that has claimed countless lives, an evolving geopolitical landscape that is causing uncertainty and volatility, and an existential crisis that is climate change.

A dynamic ASEAN-China cooperation puts us in a formidable position to face these challenges.

We thank China for the support to our pandemic response, including the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework.

While some countries stockpiled life-saving vaccines, China quickly came to our aid demonstrating its commitment to make vaccines global public goods. And for this we are deeply grateful.

We have all made significant headways in containing the pandemic. Now, we must rebuild our economies and make up lost ground.

Connectivity and robust trade will be the key motors of our recovery. It is thus vital that we fast track efforts to synergize the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 with the Belt and Road Initiative.

We must also hasten work towards the immediate entry into force of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

We are all too aware of the horrendous consequences of a warming climate, especially for developing coastal countries like the Philippines.

As we prepare for the upcoming COP26, we reiterate our call for urgent climate action. We welcome China's pledge to halt the funding of overseas coal plants and invest more in clean renewable energy.

We hark back to the Philippines' ASEAN Chairmanship in 2017 where we declared the Decade of Coastal and Marine Environmental Protection in the South China Sea from [2017] to 2027.

Pursuant to this, we call for holistic efforts to protect and preserve biodiversity and the marine environment.

Vulnerable marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs and other living spaces of endangered and migratory wildlife species, should be prioritized.

We must strengthen cooperation in addressing marine debris and transboundary pollution. And we must ramp up efforts to fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. These are crucial to achieve food security and to mitigate global warming.

Your Majesty, Excellencies,

A rules-based order is the lynchpin of regional peace and stability. The peaceful resolution of disputes is a necessary and indispensable pillar of any order anchored on the majesty of the law.

The 2016 Arbitral Award is a significant contribution to the corpus of international law, particularly the 1982 UNCLOS. It singles out no one.

Rather, it justly favors and benefits the community of law-abiding nations by providing clarity to all. This clarity --- which is beyond compromise --- is the Philippines' humble contribution to the international legal order.

We have pledged to uphold the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, adhere to freedom of navigation and overflight, exercise [self-restraint], and protect the marine environment as stipulated in UNCLOS.

Talks should not remain empty rhetoric. They should be translated into action to fortify the trust and confidence that have cultivated through the years. *Acta non verba*. Deeds, not words.

The Philippines remains committed to the conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

We are proud to have contributed to the substantive progress in the second reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text despite difficult circumstances.

With our determination and dedication, we have provisionally agreed on the Preamble of the text. Much is left to be done but be assured of the Philippines' unwavering support to the task at hand.

Three decades of fruitful ASEAN-China cooperation have benefited us all.

We hope to continue reinvigorating our partnership for the next thirty years to come.

I look forward to seeing all of you, as well as President Xi Jinping at the Special Commemorative Summit later this year.

Thank you.

--- END ---