



Office of the President of the Philippines

STATEMENT

Participation of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte in the 13th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit Retreat Session 26 November 2021

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte lauded ASEM partners' renewed commitment to open and inclusive multilateralism and the rule of law at the Retreat Session of the virtual 13th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit held on 26 November 2021.

"This is exactly what we need in this time of profound change and uncertainty. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Asia-Pacific. Ours is a region full of promise but fraught with potential flashpoints. These include disputes in one of the world's most important sea lanes of communication," the President added.

President Duterte stated that disputes must be settled peacefully in accordance with international law, stressing that the South China Sea must remain a sea of peace, stability and prosperity, where the vital interests of stakeholders inside and outside the region are recognized and respected.

"There can be no real peace if the strong trample on the weak – just because it can. There can be no other acceptable basis for a just maritime order but the law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," President Duterte underscored.

He thanked ASEM partners that have issued statements of support on upholding the rule of law in the South China Sea and welcomed their interest to enhance cooperation, including in maritime security.

"This is as it should be – the entire community of nations – working for peace, committing to stability and upholding the majesty of the law," President Duterte stressed.

The President was joined by key government officials including Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro L. Locsin Jr., Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lourdes O. Yparraguirre, National Economic Planning and Development Authority Undersecretary Rosemarie Edillon, Presidential Assistant on Foreign Affairs Robert E.A. Borje and Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Jaime Victor Ledda at the Retreat Session. **END**