



MALACAÑAN PALACE
MANILA

Intervention of
PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE
13th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit
Retreat Session
26 November 2021

Thank you, Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Excellencies, Your Majesty

Asia and Europe confront challenges that require collective responses. Today, we renew our commitment to open and inclusive multilateralism and the rule of law.

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 Philippine position is clear and unchanging – disputes must be settled peacefully in accordance with international law.

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.

We acknowledge China's reaffirmation of commitment to an early conclusion of negotiations on a substantive and effective Code of Conduct on the South China Sea.

Excellencies, we all want progress and prosperity for our peoples. And we know that peace and stability are the preconditions for these to happen. There can be no real peace if the strong trample on the weak – just because it can.

There can never be other acceptable basis for a just maritime order but the law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

All countries – big and small – must adhere to the rule of law faithfully and consistently. Otherwise, there will be chaos.

We thank our ASEM partners that have issued statements of support on upholding the rule of law in the South China Sea. We also welcome their interest to enhance cooperation, including in maritime security.

We are encouraged by these developments.

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

Thank you. **END**