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PRESS BRIEFING OF DFA SPOKESPERSON
MARIA THERESA DAZA
September 2, 2022 (2:19 P.M. - 2:45 P.M.)

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Thank you, Asec. Dale De Vera. Good afternoon to the members of Malacañang Press Corps and the DFA Press Corps. This press briefing is being conducted in coordination with the OPS, which takes the lead in the pronouncements of all presidential visits.

As previously announced by OPS, President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos, Jr. will undertake his inaugural state visits from 4 to 7 September 2022. His first state visit as President will be to Indonesia from 4 to 6 September, upon the invitation of Indonesian President Joko Widodo.

The visit will be highlighted by the first meeting between the two leaders who are expected to discuss the two countries' active and multi-faceted cooperation on defense, maritime, border, economic and people-to-people cooperation. They will also exchange views on major issues affecting the region and the world.

During the state visit, the two Presidents will witness the signing of several key agreements in the areas of defense and culture as well as a comprehensive plan of action that will sort the country's bilateral priorities over the next five years. The President will also meet with business leaders to promote trade and investment to support the Philippines' Economic Agenda under his administration.

After the visit to Indonesia, the President will proceed to Singapore for a state visit from 6 to 7 September at the invitation of President Halimah Yacob. President Marcos, Jr. will have separate meetings with the Singaporean President and Prime Minister Lee Hsein Loong to discuss the close bilateral relations between the two countries as well as regional and global issues.

President Marcos, Jr. and Prime Minister Lee will also witness the signing of agreements in the areas of counter-terrorism and data privacy. Singapore is a key trade and investment partner of the Philippines. An economic briefing and business roundtable meetings will be organized where the President intends to invite investments into the Philippines and create more job opportunities in the country.

The President will also meet with the Filipino communities in Indonesia and Singapore to personally assure them of the government's continuing commitment to protect their rights and promote their welfare as overseas Filipinos.

The President's back-to-back visit to Indonesia and Singapore as his inaugural overseas trip demonstrates the importance of the Philippines' places on the relations with our fellow ASEAN neighbors.

That ends the statement on the state visit of President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos to Indonesia and Singapore.

ASEC. DE VERA: Thank you, Ambassador Daza. The first question we have is Celerina Monte on NHK.

CELERINA MONTE/NHK: Good afternoon, Ma'am. I just want to ask, you have mentioned about this supposed agreement that the Philippines and Indonesia as well as Singapore will be signing during the state visits. Could you elaborate more on the defense cooperation that the Philippines and Indonesia will be signing as well as on the agreement between Singapore and the Philippines regarding counter-terrorism and data privacy?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Thank you, Celerina, for that two questions. You are asking for details of the defense agreement to be signed between the Philippines and Indonesia as well as the counter-terrorism and data privacy deals with Singapore. Maybe it will be useful for all, to actually share with you the deliverables in both countries.

So for Indonesia, what is being envisioned is, the signing of a plan of action for five years which is 2022 to 2027 and this will be signed between the Department of Foreign Affairs as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. The plan of action will lay out a comprehensive and actionable roadmap for bilateral cooperation over the next five years.

It will be a comprehensive document that outlines bilateral commitments and as well, you know, a wide range of areas of cooperation. Among the areas of cooperation that are being identified are in terms of security and defense, border management, counter-terrorism, economy, energy, maritime affairs, culture, education, labor, health and consular matters, among other things. That's the first deliverable for Indonesia.

The second is in terms of what you were interested in, the renewal of the 1997 agreement on cooperative activities in the field of defense and security. The active defense and military engagement between our two countries, the Philippines and Indonesia, is really anchored on the 1997 cooperative agreement in the field of defense and security or what is called the DSCA. The agreement has expired, and now we are renewing this agreement. It will serve as the mother framework for all defense and security cooperation with Indonesia.

It is significant as the defense cooperation between the two countries has actually increased through the years. Among the collaboration that is being identified are of course cooperation between the defense establishment, engagement in joint and combined training activities, border security, exchange of visit, education, information sharing and development of interoperability, among others. So, that's the second deliverable that is being envisioned for Indonesia.

And the third is actually in terms of the renewal of the MOU on cultural cooperation, which will be signed by our National Commission of Culture and the Arts and the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia. The MOU will focus on cultural cooperation, and hopes to promote people-to-people exchanges and mutual understanding of cultural activities as well as promotion of cultural-related industries.

Allow me to go back to the second document. I think, I did not say that it will be signed by the DND and the Ministry of Defense of Indonesia, so that is in terms of the DSCA. So that is for Indonesia.

So in terms of the deliverables for Singapore, which is your second question? There are two that are being envisioned. One is the arrangement concerning the assignment of a team to the regional Counter Terrorism Information Facility or what is called the CTIF. This will be signed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines as well as the Singapore Armed Forces.

The CTIF is a multilateral platform for monitoring, research and analysis of terrorist activities. By deploying a Philippine officer, the Philippines can share its experience and expertise in addressing or combating terrorism at the same time, gather valuable intelligence from other countries and expands its defense network. That's the first deliverable in Singapore.

The second deliverable, Celerina, is the MOU on cooperation and personal data protection which will be signed by the National Privacy Commission or NPC and the Personal Data Protection Commission of Singapore. For this MOU, what is being envisioned? Is the strengthening of the digitization efforts of both countries and engendering trust in cross-border data flows and helping to protect the data privacy, for example, the Filipinos in the digital era and encouraging data participation in the Philippine Digital Economy.

So, these are the deliverables in both Indonesia and Singapore. I think those were the two questions, Celerina, that you asked of us.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Good afternoon, Ambassador Daza, can you hear me? I don't think she can hear me. I will ask my question nonetheless. Can you just relay it to the ambassador if ever she is experiencing technical difficulties? So Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo earlier said that the Philippines will bring up the case of Mary Jane Veloso during the statement of President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. May we know if the Philippines will ask for certain requests? Will we go as far as to asking a presidential pardon for Mary Jane Veloso?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Okay. Katrina, I am not privy to that and I wish to defer in terms of discussing this further largely because I think we might preempt the discussions that will happen in Indonesia.

So, but rest assured as the Secretary has actually mentioned during the budget hearing that it is an issue that will be raised.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Ma'am, just a follow-up question, will the President at least make an effort to personally visit Mary Jane Veloso who has been in jail in Indonesia for 12 years?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: I'm also not...I cannot share...I am not privy to the information on that. I know that the President's visit has actually, has a number of activities. He's there from four to six. And because this is a state visit, there are a number of activities that had already been lined up. So, I do not have information on that specific question.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Thank you, ma'am.

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Thank you too.

Q: I'm [unclear] from Japanese News [unclear]. Would you share the detail of President Bongbong Marcos schedule? What time and when will PBBM meet Indonesian President Joko Widodo?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Okay. Can I get your name again?

Q: Yes. My surname is Shiga.

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Shiga. Okay Mr. Shiga, for security reasons we cannot divulge the itinerary or program of the President but in terms of information that has been shared we will... it [unclear] that will be September 5 where the bulk of the official activities will be undertaken in Indonesia and then afterwards, in terms of Singapore, it will be the 6th and 7th. But in terms of specific details, we are not privy to that, and even if we are, for security reasons we may not be able to share it with you.

CELERINA MONTE/NHK: Okay, ma'am. Ma'am regarding this visit, will the President raise the South China Sea issue during his bilateral talks with the Singaporean and Indonesian Presidents?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Thank you, Celerina. Okay, as I mentioned earlier aside from discussing bilateral relations there will be an exchange of views on regional and global developments and as all are actually leaders and members of ASEAN there will clearly be discussions on key regional issues of mutual interests including the West Philippine Sea or South China Sea issue cognizant that all three countries are actually have the common goal to maintain peace and stability and prevent incidents in this particular part of the world, in this part of the world. They will also talk about other important geopolitical developments.

So, they will discuss it and beyond that, there will be other regional and global developments that will also be discussed.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Ambassador Daza. We have a question from Business Mirror, Malou Talosig-Bartolome: The President got so many invitations from foreign envoys to visit their respective countries, why start this string of overseas travels with Indonesia and Singapore?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Thank you. Malou, is it Malou who's asking 'no? That's a very good question. Why the President chose Indonesia and Singapore? [unclear] The Indonesian President Widodo and Singaporean President Halimah Yacob to visit both Indonesia and Singapore respectively. As close neighbors and founding members of ASEAN, the Philippines enjoys active engagement with both Indonesia and Singapore in terms of myriad areas including security and defense, trade and investment, people-to-people exchanges, and more.

The President's state visit to Indonesia seeks to solidify the close political, diplomatic, and security ties between Manila and Jakarta. Indonesia is also the largest economy and country in ASEAN and has the largest population and market offering great potential for further economic engagements. The Philippines and Indonesia also are fellow archipelagic states sharing an extensive porous border and our close partners in maritime cooperation having concluded a landmark agreement on the exclusive economic zone boundary the limitation in 2014 and currently negotiating the delimitation of other continental shelf boundaries.

In addition, our region will be the center of global attention with Indonesia hosting the G20 Summit, Cambodia hosting the ASEAN Summit, and Thailand hosting the APEC Leaders' Summit in November. Indonesia will also assume the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2023. In terms of Singapore, Singapore has been the Philippines' top trading partner in ASEAN. It is the sixth largest trading partner worldwide, the top source of approved investments in 2021, and our second largest source of OFW remittances.

The President's state visit to Singapore aims to bolster the robust economic ties and encourage more investments to the Philippines to support our country's post-pandemic recovery. Singapore also hosts a vibrant diaspora of 200,000 Filipinos majority of whom are professional, skilled, and semi-skilled expatriates. For this reason, the President has decided to accept the invitation to visit Indonesia followed by Singapore for his inaugural overseas trip.

Thank you for the question, Malou.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Ambassador Daza. We also have another question from Andree Calonzon from Bloomberg: Can we expect investment deals to be signed during the state visits?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Another good question. The one who takes the lead when it comes to trade and investment is actually DGI but we've been informed that they're preparing a number of business agreements to be signed in both countries and

this will actually be tailored to the priority areas of this administration. So, it could include infrastructure, renewable energy, food and security, fertilizer importation among others.

MODERATOR: Okay. We have questions from Mr. Cecil Morella of AFP. Sir? Okay, let me just read his question: The renewed DSCA between Indonesia and the Philippines does this include cooperation and protecting maritime resources from other claimant countries or mostly Islamic militants or both?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: I didn't hear it can it be repeated, please?

MODERATOR: I'm sorry. The question from Mr. Cecil Morella, Ambassador is: The renewed DSCA between Indonesia and the Philippines does this include cooperation and protecting maritime resources from other claimant countries or mostly Islamic militants or both?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Can I defer answering that question? We will actually check with our office that handles it so that we can actually accurately respond to Cecil's question. The information that I have at this point in terms of the DSCA is what I actually raised with you earlier.

MODERATOR: Okay. I think we do not have any more who want to ask questions, Ambassador. Do we have any closing statements?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: I do like to raise a number of things which were not asked, which may help them if that's all right like for example, many times they asked who will join the delegation. I'd like to share that from our Department, of course, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo will be joining the delegation and because there's a focus on economic cooperation we also expect the members of the Economic Team Secretary of Finance Benjamin Diokno, Trade and Industry Alfredo Pascual, Secretary of Budget and Management Amenah Pangandaman, Secretary of National Economic and Development Authority Arsenio Balisacan and Bangko Sentral of the Philippines Governor Felipe Medalla to join and as I mentioned earlier there are a number of agreements that will be entered into and there will be representatives from other agencies that are relevant to the agreements that are to be signed and entered into during the visit itself.

JOHNNA GIOLAGON/MANILA TIMES: Hi! Good afternoon, Ambassador. After the trip to Indonesia and Singapore, do we have any other foreign trips scheduled for the President? Thank you.

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Thank you, Johnna. I think we all know that the President will address the UNGA (UN General Assembly) on 20 September 2022. He will present the Philippines vision for the United Nations and our role in fostering international cooperation to address pressing global challenges. During the visit to New York in the United States, bilateral meetings with other world leaders are being arranged but this is

still subject to confirmation. Bilateral meetings with key partners are also being scheduled for the Secretary of Foreign Affairs.

And in his trip to the United States, and as in Indonesia and Singapore, the President also intends to meet the Filipino community during his visit and hold a number of business meetings which are being organized by the departments of Finance, and Trade and Industry.

So in terms of a forthcoming trip, after these state visits to Indonesia and Singapore, there is the trip to New York, to United States, to participate in the UN General Assembly.

JEROME MORALES/REUTERS: Thank you, Ambassador, for this briefing, I appreciate this. Which companies or what types of firms are invited in the business roundtable meetings with President Marcos in Singapore? Thank you.

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Thank you for that question. We will get back to you. The information that we have at this point, because we are not the one arranging and preparing for it, is that there will be a series of meetings. There will be roundtables and a series of meetings, and there will also be economic investment agreements that will be signed by private sector.

We will get back to you. I hope our team is actually listing. I've noted that there are number of questions that we'll have to get back on. So we will revert to you once we get the information.

ASEC. DE VERA: Ambassador, we have a question from Karen Ow Yong of DZRH: Will President Marcos, reciprocate the invite of Indonesia and Singapore?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: It's not for me to answer that. Maybe OP is in the best position to answer it.

ASEC. DE VERA: We have another question from Alvin [unclear]. Alvin? Okay, I'll just read his question. Was there a specific date when PBMM set to visit US?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: What we know is it will be during the time of UNGA. So what is already clear is that he will speak in September 20. So in terms of the specific details – when he's going, how long he will stay – we do not have information on that yet.

ASEC. DE VERA: Ma'am, we have one more question from Vince Lopez of Manila Standard: Follow up on the UNGA speech of PBBM. Will the President intend also to meet with President Joe Biden during his US trip?

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: I partially answered it by saying that there are arrangements being made for bilateral meetings. But it's still being addressed, and there is no confirmation on any of these meetings as yet.

At this point, we'd like to focus on Indonesia and Singapore, being the inaugural state visits of the President.

ASEC. DE VERA: Okay. Do we have other questions? Okay, one last question, Ambassador: Will the DFA or OPS issue regular statements with regard to the outcome of the President's engagement? From Dreo Calonzo of Bloomberg.

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Asec., siguro you will answer that. Kasi it's the OPS that will take the lead kapag state visits. But for us, in DFA, I'd like to say that, of course, SFA will have his own program. And where possible, we will actually have releases, regular releases on the activities of SFA in this visit.

ASEC. DE VERA: Okay. I think the other questions are to be answered by the OPS or by the Press Secretary or the OP. I think we don't have any more questions, ma'am. Thank you very much, Ambassador Tess Daza, DFA Spokesperson. Thank you very much, Malacañang Press Corps and FOCAP members. Good afternoon.

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: Maraming salamat po to the DFA Press Corps as well. Thank you.

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