

**OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

MEDIA INTERVIEW BY PRESS SECRETARY ROSE BEATRIX “TRIXIE” CRUZ-ANGELES

[Held at the Hilton Garden Inn in New York, USA | 22 September 2022]

OPENING STATEMENT:

PRESS SECRETARY ROSE BEATRIX “TRIXIE” CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, you are aware that today the President met with the US President. And on the table for them to talk about was the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, security in our area, the continuation of trade partnerships, defense. Of course under the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, there are priorities: data privacy, governance, taxes, and so on.

So I won't talk much. I'll just let you ask the questions. Questions, please.

Q&A:

Q: Hi ma'am, magandang hapon.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Magandang hapon din po.

Q: Ma'am, sa mga Pilipinong naghihintay sa ating bansa kapag tinanong po ano po ang magiging benefits nito --- itong pagpunta ni Pangulong Marcos at ng kanyang delegasyon? How would you answer that, ma'am?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Bukod sa pag-address niya sa United Nations, nandito ang ating Pangulo para makipag-usap sa ilang mga potential investors.

So gusto ko lang ibalita na so far sa taon na ito, mataas na ang foreign direct investments natin nasa 4 billion na with --- something like 17 percent increase from the previous year of the same period.

So pero ang primary interest nga ng Pangulo bukod sa pag-address sa UN General Assembly ay paghihikayat sa mga foreign direct investments. So nakita na natin he has held business meetings over the past three days. Many of them with potential investors in the field of communications, energy, and industries related to agriculture and food security.

So ang ginagawa natin dito, ini-increase natin 'yung partnerships din natin at kasama ito doon sa framework na pinag-uusapan ni President Biden.

So in addition doon sa napag-usapan at sa sidelines na nakausap niya ang Japanese Prime Minister at si President Joe Biden ay 'yung primary vision niya for economic transformation.

So yes, malaki po ang magiging benefit nito sa taong-bayan dahil mararamdaman po natin pagdating sa ekonomiya natin sa pagbangon natin post-pandemic.

Q: What can you tell us about the meeting with the World Bank President? What came out of it?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Wala pa po tayo doon sa details ng kanilang pinag-usapan pero ang sinasabi ng ating Pangulo he is very proud to continue with the partnerships with the World Bank lalong-lalo na sa pagtulong dito sa ating economic transformation.

We'll provide you with details as soon as they are available.

Q: Hi ma'am, any details po sa meeting ni President Marcos and former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Ah details. Ilalabas po natin 'yan mamaya. I need to talk further with the President. He just says that he had spoken with Tony Blair regarding the institution that he heads and how they can partner further with the Philippines in achieving their goals.

So doon primarily umikot 'yung kanilang usapan doon sa institution ni Mr. Blair.

Q: Follow up po doon sa question niya, how soon na mararamdaman ng Pilipino 'yung pagbabago? 'Yung 'di ba sabi kasi more investors, more jobs, how soon 'yun, 'yung projected niyo?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Actually ang ginagawa natin dito tinutulak natin ano kahit ngayon marami ng investments. There's a marked increase siyempre post-pandemic ito, minamadali natin at gusto natin mas marami ang mag-invest.

But primarily most of these talks are exploratory. Tinitingnan natin 'yung mga potential partnerships. Mayroong iba na nagbibigay na ng preliminary commitments.

So ikukuwenta po natin 'yan. We'll get the details from the DTI at the end of this trip para ano... Magku-kuwenta tayo at ire-report po namin 'yan.

Kung tatanungin niyo kung gaano kabilis of course it will depend on how quickly these partnerships and these ventures are going to be formed. Sa ngayon, very optimistic tayo kasi pati 'yung mga taong kausap ng ating Pangulo optimistic din sila.

Gusto nilang mag-invest kasi nandiyan na 'yung fundamentals natin. Naayos natin ang tax system, maganda 'yung ekonomiya, masipag ang mga tao, and the system is ripe now for more investments.

So iyon ang nakikita natin. Right now, there is an air of optimism and we are hoping that it can be delivering kumbaga as soon as possible. Pero hindi puwede siyempre tayong maglagay ng date 'no, exploratory pa 'yung iba.

Q: Hi ma'am, kanina nabanggit po ni Secretary Pascual 'yung discussions with two companies: one in connection to modular nuclear reactor on the small scale, 'yung isa bigger scale daw. Can we find out anong stage na ba tayo, ma'am, like are these exploratory talks or may commitments na ba? And if so, like --- and what does it say about the Philippines' projection for nuclear power naman po, ma'am?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, ang sinasabi kasi ni Secretary of Energy Raphael Lotilla is that

minamadali natin 'yung tinatawag na 'yung regulatory framework for that kasi wala pa ngayon and that will require legislation.

However, 'pag ginawang priority 'yan hindi naman natin nakikita na maaantala ang investments in nuclear energy. So I'm not sure kung maka-characterize pa siya as exploratory but there are certainly serious talks about it.

Q: Ma'am, was the West Philippine Sea dispute tackled during the bilateral meeting? And was there any affirmation po or reaffirmation from President Biden on the commitment of the US to defend the Philippines in case of any attacks on the South China Sea?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: With regard to 'yung defense, kinikilala ng Estados Unidos na treaty partner tayo and among those treaty agreements or executive agreements ay 'yung Mutual Defense Treaty. So the recognition alone is significant.

Binanggit din naman po ni President Biden that security in our region is certainly going to be on the table. Whether or not they will come to an agreement of something or redefine the Mutual Defense Treaty, wala pa po tayong impormasyon tungkol diyan although alam natin pinag-usapan nila 'yun.

So ano pa ba? Iyong partnership, trade alliance. The United States remains one of the biggest trade partners of the Philippines. So 'yun ang pinapalaganap ng ating Pangulo.

Ang dinagdag ng Pangulo natin doon sa agenda with the talks with President Biden is the large Filipino community that resides in the United States. So on other things, certainly they were expected: Mutual Defense, trade, peace in the region, and so on, and of course the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. So nadagdag ni Pangulo natin 'yung ating Filipino communities here.

Q: Ma'am, related to the West Philippine Sea, I understand the President and the Japanese Prime Minister also tackled at length the issue.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Yes.

Q: Mayroon po ba tayong aasahang assistance in terms of perhaps including our capability to patrol the West Philippine Sea, sa ating Coast Guard, for example, may mga barko ba tayong aasahan diyan, mga armaments, et cetera?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, the talks weren't very specific yet kasi nga these are sideline talks. But certainly maritime issues were forefront in the agenda: maritime law, maritime security, and peace in our region. So that was one of the primary considerations on the side of the Japanese Prime Minister.

So we will see what will be the result of this one. I understand they are setting for further talks on this matter.

Q: Was the VFA discussed?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: It was not specifically mentioned in the plans on either side, ma'am.

Q: Ma'am, during the meeting with the Prime Minister of Japan, were there any invitation for the President na pumunta po ng Japan for a state visit or na mangyayari within this year po?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Nothing specific has been mentioned with regard to that.

Q: Did President Biden extend an invitation and vice versa for a visit?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: We have no information on that one. However, it's always a welcome possibility.

Q: Filipinos are still a minority dito sa US pero did they ever discuss 'yung Asian hate crime?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: I think that the President had mentioned this in his talk before the UN General Assembly that this thing has to come to an end. Asian hate has been specifically mentioned in his speech.

So there is a distinct possibility that this could be brought up, if not now, at a later date.

Q: So it was never discussed with Biden. Okay. Thank you.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Yes, sir?

Q: Secretary, President Biden said he wanted to talk about human rights during the bilateral meeting. What came out of the meeting with regard to that topic?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, we don't have the details on the matter of human rights but that is part of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. So it's one of the four pillars, it's part of the justice pillar. But we don't have information on that one.

He did mention that he wants to talk about it. That was part of the plan on the part of the US President.

Q: How about Ukraine? Was there any mention of the conflict in Ukraine?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: None that we can see right now.

Q: Good afternoon, Secretary Trixie. President Biden thanked President Marcos for the country's stand on the war against Ukraine and Russia. May we ask po specifically from President Marcos, ano po 'yung stand ng Philippine government?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, statements were made public even before. We simply continue the policy of the previous administration with the President making a definite... Well, the President will not veer from the friend to all, enemy to none, general foreign policy.

However, they do recognize inherent injustices and this forms part of that foreign policy. Beyond that, there are no other specifics.

Q: Ma'am, 'yung kay former ES Vic Rodriguez po. Ma'am, can you spell out what are his responsibilities and tasks as Presidential Chief of Staff and how is this different from the tasks of the Cabinet Secretary, the office of which was abolished in the name of rightsizing the bureaucracy?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: It's a rather complicated question. I'm afraid I'll have to defer that until the publication of AO 1. So at that time, it will be public. So let's see first.

Q: So sa ngayon, ma'am, what is the status of Sir Rodriguez po prior to the --- 'yun nga 'yung publication of AO 1?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, he is considered the Presidential Chief of Staff right now.

Q: Second question, ma'am, doesn't the creation of this new office go against 'yung policy of the Marcos administration to rightsize the bureaucracy?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, like I said, we'll have to defer that until the publication of AO 1 because we may not have been adding let's say personnel and so on. So let's see how it was formulated first. The specifics will have to be laid out in AO 1 so then we can answer your question.

Q: Ma'am follow up question, 'yung tungkol po doon kay ES, mayroon na po bang mga pangalan na pinagpipilian, like may shortlist ba kung sino 'yung papalit sa kanya?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, there are certainly several names being considered, names that we cannot make public understandably I'm sure.

Q: Ilan, ma'am?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Ano naman significance nung ilan? *[laughs]*

Q: Last po, his 100 days is just around the corner. Ano po sa tingin niyo 'yung major achievement ng Pangulo?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, actually I'll be coming up with a statement on that later on. Gagawain ko 'yan ngayon eh. *[laughs]*

Okay, other questions? All right. Thank you. Habol, habol. Sige habol, game.

Q: Sa ruling po ng RTC sa Manila na ibinabasura po 'yung appeal ng government to declare the CPP-NPA as terrorists? Ano ang reaksiyon ng Palace doon, ma'am?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Actually since the decision is not yet final and this is an RTC decision, marami pang available remedies ang ating gobyerno. But we also want to see 'no the details on this one.

Who filed the case? Under what law? Because I understand this might have been filed under the Human Security Act rather than the Terrorism Act.

So these details are still not available to us so it would be improper to comment right now.

So let's see. RTC kasi ito. Under the Terrorism Act, it would have been filed with the Court of Appeals.

Q: So it's safe to say hindi pa tapos ang laban?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Yes, malayo pa 'to, malayo pa. And you know we don't even know what parameters are here. By then, we'll understand what remedies will be available if remedies are even necessary.

Like I said, it might have been filed under the Human Security Act in which case the remedy really is to use the Anti-Terrorism Law.

Thank you very much.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: It's also of note that of several requests --- I understand a lot of requests had been made to the US President --- that it is significant that he spoke only with President Marcos on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

While it's true he spoke with one other person, that was a postponed meeting. And so although more it becomes significant that President Marcos has been able to speak with the US President.

Q: What was the reason po bakit Pilipinas ang pinili ni Biden?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, we are not really sure. All we can see is the outcome of this one. It might be the significance of the matters that had to be discussed today.

Q: Ma'am, who requested the bilateral meeting?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: You know when it comes to --- with international talks like this, it's almost always joint. So there are negotiations that are made back and forth.

It's always in the interest of both parties. So I think it might not be really relevant who makes the request.

At any rate, what we can see is that the President of the United States has met with the President of the Philippines.

Q: Does this say anything about how US President Biden regards the Philippines as an ally and a partner po?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: We certainly would like to think so. But being an ally and a partner that's evident.

We are treaty allies and economic partners. So those are facts. Thank you.

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