

OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY
News and Information Bureau

PRESS BRIEFING OF OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY OIC-USEC. CHELOY GARAFIL WITH DFA SPOKESPERSON AMBASSADOR TERESITA DAZA, AND MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS ASSISTANT SECRETARY ERIC GERARDO E. TAMAYO
November 7, 2022 (11:47 A.M. – 12:04 A.M.)

USEC. EUGENIO: Magandang umaga. Kasama natin si Office of the Press Secretary Officer-in-Charge at Undersecretary, Attorney Cheloy Velicaria-Garafil. Ma'am?

OIC-USEC. GARAFIL: Good morning, Malacañang Press Corps, Department of Foreign Affairs Press Corps and APEC Philippine delegation.

Under Thailand's chairmanship, the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting will convene next week. The economic leaders from 21 APEC economies will discuss sustainable trade and investment, reconnecting the region and charting our paths towards post-pandemic recovery and inclusive and sustainable growth.

The APEC is an opportunity for us to push for our economic agenda and priorities. These include the empowerment of our MSMEs and their inclusion in global value chains, recognition of the essential role of our maritime crews and seafarers in ensuring stable and resilient supply chains, ensuring our food and energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The President will likewise participate in the APEC CEO Summit which is a meeting of top business leaders in the region. He will meet with top executives of Thai companies to discuss business opportunities, investments and expansion plans. He will also have the opportunity to meet with leaders of economies to discuss our bilateral relations and seek path towards mutual economic benefits.

The President will also meet with the Filipino community in Thailand.

We have with us this morning the following DFA officials who will give us a full view of President Ferdinand R. Marcos' participation in the APEC 2022 and related summits in Thailand: DFA Spokesperson Ambassador Teresita Daza, and Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Assistant Secretary Eric Gerardo E. Tamayo.

Ambassador? Ma'am?

DFA SPOKESPERSON AMBASSADOR DAZA: Thank you, OIC Attorney Garafil for that. And thank you again for this opportunity to join you, the Malacañang Press Corps, as well as the DFA Press Corps in sharing insights and updates on the preparation for Philippine participation in APEC.

As you all know, the President will lead and attend, will participate in the APEC Economic Leaders' Week in Bangkok from 16 to 19 November. He will be joined by other members of the Cabinet including SFA – our Secretary of Foreign Affairs – and the Secretary of DTI among others.

This will be the first APEC meeting for the President and his administration. It will also be the first in-person APEC Leaders' Meeting since 2018.

The APEC is the premier Asia-Pacific Economic Forum established in 1989 with the primary goal of supporting sustainable economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. The Philippines is a founding member economy.

Through our engagement, and as mentioned by Attorney Garafil, the Philippines has contributed to the APEC agenda of promoting investment and trade across the region, facilitating the conduct of business, the development of human capacity and capability, the adoption of regulatory reforms, the easing of transition into a digital economy, and the expediting of economic recovery due to COVID pandemic.

As I also mentioned in our last briefing, APEC is responsible for about 85% of our trade abroad. APEC economies account for 82% of tourism flows into the country, and 60% of Filipinos abroad call APEC home and are responsible for 68% of the remittance back to the Philippines. APEC has also provided economic and technical and capacity assistance to various government agencies.

The Philippines has hosted APEC meetings twice, in 1996 and 2015.

We are very happy today we also have with us Assistant Secretary Eric Tamayo who is currently assigned in the Office of the Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations. He is also our Director General of the Philippine APEC National Secretariat.

DFA ASEC TAMAYO: Thank you very much and good morning. And I convey our thanks and appreciation for extending the invitation to us this morning to discuss with you the coming trip of the President to Bangkok.

And this is quite significant; there are a lot of things happening in Bangkok. And we can go through them certainly, in greater detail to the extent possible. But nevertheless, this is an important undertaking for each and every member of the APEC partnership.

APEC is the most important, non-binding multilateral and regional engagement of the Philippines. And the meeting this year represents the first gathering of leaders since the pandemic and since 2018 as mentioned earlier. And one of the key value propositions of APEC is the in-person, face-to-face meetings among the leaders; and the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting is the highlight of each and every APEC year for the last thirty-two years.

So, we look forward to positive outcomes for the President's engagement here. And certainly, we will be looking forward to the positive impact of the President's visit over the next couple of years by his participation in APEC. Thank you very much.

USEC. EUGENIO: Okay, for our first question, Anna Bajo of GMA News Online.

ANNA BAJO/GMA NEWS ONLINE: Good morning po. May we know lang po if President Marcos will meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin and US Vice President Kamala Harris at the sidelines of the APEC Summit?

DFA ASEC. TAMAYO: Thank you very much for that. Right now, I can't say that among the roster of bilateral meetings of the President that these meetings have yet to be explored for the time being.

ANNA BAJO/GMA NEWS ONLINE: How about other bilateral meetings po with other country leaders po, baka mayroon lang pong information?

DFA ASEC. TAMAYO: Yes, the President is having bilateral meetings with six counterparts. The arrangements are still being finalized so I am not at liberty to disclose yet at this time which economies and leaders they are. So, we are still finalizing the details for this.

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: ASec., can I add, regarding the question on Kamala Harris, as you all know, the US government has actually already mentioned that she will make visit the Philippines. The visit will be after APEC. It will be a three-day visit, details of which will be shared in due course.

The Philippines of course welcomes the visit of the Vice President to Manila as it will provide another opportunity to further strengthen engagement, our engagement with the US following high-level meetings in the past.

She will also be joined by the Second Gentleman in this forthcoming visit. As I mentioned, details will be forthcoming as soon as these are available.

USEC. EUGENIO: Okay. Next question, Alvin Baltazar, Radyo Pilipinas.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Good morning po. Sir, ma'am, what specific economic issues the President will push in the APEC?

DFA ASEC. TAMAYO: Thank you very much for that. Definitely, the President will push for APEC revitalizing its role as a driver of global economic growth. If you may recall, prior to the pandemic, the Asia Pacific Region had been the significant driver of global economic growth, and this was further—this economic growth trajectory was disrupted by COVID-19 pandemic. So, the challenge before us is to facilitate the rapid recovery of economies from arising out of the pandemic, and also to undertake the necessary measures to also counter disruptive forces that affect the current economic situation around the globe.

So that is something that the President will push for, recalling the significant role played by APEC in driving global growth and globalization in the world.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Follow-up lang po doon sa business meetings niya. Saan po engaged iyong mga businessmen na makaka-meeting ni Pangulo doon sa Thailand?

DFA ASEC. TAMAYO: The proposed slate business meetings are being arranged by our Department of Trade and Industry, and additional details will be forthcoming. These are also currently being finalized by our Trade and Industry office. Be that as it may, the President is indeed slated to meet executives of businesses based in Thailand in the hopes of attracting business and additional investment to the Philippines.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: Asec. Tamayo, sir, good morning. You said you were looking forward to positive outcomes. What outcomes exactly are we hoping for?

DFA ASEC. TAMAYO: Well, this is in the context of the challenges that we are facing around the world. If you see the economic prognosis coming from our experts, the situation, global economic situation is indeed quite disrupting many lives and many livelihoods. And it is important for us to be able to highlight the fact that economies need to address and need the future proof of the region in responding to these disruptions, be it coming from the pandemic and other disruptions around the globe.

So, it is focused on the drivers of the economy, particularly on ensuring the flow and the operations of the various supply chains around the globe.

The critical role of essential workers, particularly our maritime crew is one of the key initiatives of Philippines in this APEC here; providing and facilitating for the safe passage of essential workers who had been affected by the pandemic.

So, these are just some of the key highlights that we think should be considered by economic leaders around the region.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: One more please. I understand you came from a meeting with the President, are there any specific issues that we expect the President to push during the meetings?

DFA ASEC. TAMAYO: So, the President will be calling an attention to the need to ensure food security, energy security and also the robust response of APEC economies to the challenge of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHIL. STAR: Is the President also expected to say something about the conflict in Ukraine considering that the Russian leader is expected to attend the conference also?

DFA ASEC. TAMAYO: Well, the President, and the Philippines, we have made pronouncements in the appropriate forum on our stand in Ukraine, and we will focus our efforts in APEC in the economic issues that impact on the region. It is certainly something that, apolitical issue, that we have made pronouncements on in other platforms and not necessarily in APEC.

KAT DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Good afternoon, sir. Sir, you mentioned that the President will be pushing for food security and energy security as well. Will he bring up deals with Russia, existing and otherwise?

DFA ASEC. TAMAYO: Bilateral issues will not be part of the discussions in the APEC platform. Although in the context of the President's advocacy on food security of course, reference will be made on the rising prices of inputs to food. And this is something that each economy actually is concerned about, the rising inflation and how this is impacting on our efforts to facilitate rapid economic recovery in the region. On energy, of course we have seen rising prices of energy, and again these are critical inputs and critical components of keeping the wheels of the economy running.

KAT DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Sir, follow up question. We understand that aside from the ASEAN, the APEC, and the EU-ASEAN Summit in Belgium, are there any other trips lined up for the President this year or early next year?

DFA ASEC. TAMAYO: Well, there are some already in the pipeline but again these are subject to additional disclosures at the appropriate time. Thank you.

USEC. EUGENIO: Okay. Last question, other matter question?

Q: For Usec. Garafil. Usec, I would like to get Malacañang's comment on the UN-HRC report about the alleged grave human rights violations and high number of EJK in the Philippines particularly in the context of the campaign against illegal drugs. I think the report was referring to the previous administration; and they also recommended about the changes in the way the problem of drugs is being addressed in the Philippines. Would you like to comment on this?

USEC. GARAFIL: I think Ambassador Daza will make the response, ma'am.

DFA SPOKESPERSON DAZA: The administration of President Marcos has made very clear pronouncements about the seriousness of his government in terms of human rights obligations. It has taken a very open and constructive approach to the issue of human rights, and as a manifestation of this constructive approach, no less than the Secretary of Justice has actually participated in a series of dialogues with the Human Rights Council where he actually mentioned the reforms that are being undertaken by the government, as well as updates on cases of interest. This is to stress that contrary to what has been mentioned about the culture of impunity, I think there has been a shift in terms of how the issue of illegal drug is actually being addressed.

Q: Thank you, ma'am.

USEC. GARAFIL: With that, I would like again to thank Malacañang Press Corps, the DFA Press Corps, and the APEC Philippine delegation for your active participation. And also, ma'am, thank you once again to Ambassador Teresita Daza and Asec. Gerardo Tamayo.

We look forward to seeing you all in APEC in Thailand.

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