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PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK

MEDIA INTERVIEW

BY

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.

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OPENING STATEMENT:

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.: Well, there's no real statement, except that I think it was very --- it was for me, of course, first time ko makapunta sa ASEAN. So it's a learning experience for me but also it was particularly significant because this is the first time they have had the ASEAN meetings face-to-face since the pandemic began. Kaya't kahit naman nakakapag-remote meeting sila, nagzo-Zoom sila. Iba talaga 'yung face-to-face.

So you know the --- much of the time 'yung mga formal is --- first kasi usually 'yung session namin bago ka pagka --- 'di ba pinapaalis na 'yung media after first statement, first couple of statements, essentially umiikot lang naman 'yung ano eh --- sa members, tungkol... Pagka may subject matter, sasabihin, anong position ng Pilipinas? Anong tingin niyo rito? What do you think? What are your --- what's your view on the worldview? What do you think about the way forward, you know, things like that. So that's what...

So I --- very, very clear na kung ano 'yung mga positioning ng mga bawat bansa kaya't doon ka matututo. Now, after that, 'yung mga bilateral o 'yung mga biglaan, na pupuntahan mo, mag-uusap kayo, doon talaga 'yun ang --- doon nagkakaroon ng detalye kung ano ba talaga pinag-uusapan.

What I learned in this --- having attended this ASEAN Summit is that marami talagang commonalities ang bawat bansa which is --- should not really be surprising, considering that we're all around --- we're all from the same area.

So they're very many similar problems. Of course. And we talk always about recovering from the pandemic economy. We talked about preparing for the next pandemic. What do we do about scarcity of let's say --- rather the prices of food, of fertilizer, energy? What are we going to do about it? What can we do about it? How do we get around it? Kung ano 'yung mga joint na pwedeng gawin para to alleviate some of the difficulties that everybody is going through.

So maraming --- marami talagang pare-pareho na concerns ang mga member countries. So that's --- that actually is a good thing because nag-agree kami na ito 'yung mga talagang problema, ito 'yung mga dapat unahin natin. And it's common. It's price of food, the price of energy, the supply side problems. I think --- inflation, what are we going to do about inflation, how do we help the MSMEs. All of that.

Kasi ang... For example the MSME situation, akala ko tayo lang 'yung 99.8 percent ang MSMEs na registered businesses. Akala ko tayo lang 'yung 63 percent. Eh 'yung iba 85 percent ang employment MSMEs eh. So very similar talaga. At 'yung situation ng ekonomiya ay 'yun na nga MSMEs talaga ang tinitingnan natin, energy, food prices, how do we handle inflation, that sort of thing.

And of course, on the geopolitical side, the same concerns also, about number one, North Korea and the missile test. 'Yung Taiwan Strait what is going to happen there, kailangan maging mas stable, and the effects of the Russian Ukraine conflict in Southeast Asia. Pare-pareho, fertilizer, oil, food prices.

So you can tell that very similar talaga ang ating situation. However, as a ray of hope is that everyone seems to agree also that the driver of the coming economy for the next year, maybe two, is still going to --- can still come from here, can still. Not necessarily will, it can. If we do of all the things that we're supposed to do, if we put all the structural elements in place, we can go back to the pre-pandemic situation where the main driver of the global economy was Southeast Asia.

So that --- that generally was the theme of everything that we spoke about. Of course, there were --- there are many times... Also, useful were the --- 'yung formal na bilateral, 'yung naka schedule na bilateral na... Meron din'yung basta't hihilain mo 'yung isa: Ano ba 'yung sinasabi mo? Ito ba? Magtulungan tayo. So it's still --- it's always very useful to have a face-to-face.

And for me, it's very useful, now I know all the member. Kilala ko na ang lahat ng mga leader ng ASEAN. At nakilala ko pa 'yung foreign minister ng Russia. Siyempre si President Joe Biden, this is our second meeting since New York.

So maayos naman. It certainly... I'll put it this way: It was very useful. It was absolutely critical that I had come and I am happy that I did. It really moves the needle in the sense that there will be changes and we know what everyone else is doing and so that we can complement each other. And that's the general idea, I think, of ASEAN and I think we had achieved that, again, in this meeting. Yeah.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Q: We noticed sir that you mentioned about your concern to have peace, stability, and prosperity in the South China Sea. A couple of times sir --- ASEAN-China and East Asia summits. What do you think were your gains from mentioning this a couple of times, sir, not just once?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: It wasn't just me. Pretty much everybody mentioned the same thing because --- again, that's what I said, maraming commonalities, that's the concern. The main --- actually ang main worry ng marami sa mga leaders is Myanmar. That the Five Point that they had agreed with ASEAN --- that Myanmar had agreed with ASEAN, eh hindi nasusunod. Anong gagawin natin?

And that was a little contentious. Kasi may mga bansa, sabi nila, basta tanggalin na natin ang Myanmar sa ASEAN. O basta't huwag nating imbitahin at all. Mayroon naman nagsasabi na hindi huwag lang 'yung mga nasa taas, pero 'yung sa ilalim kailangan pa rin natin kausapin 'yan. Meron naman, tayo 'yun. Sinabi ko, kausapin natin lahat. Kausapin mo pati 'yung nasa position, pati 'yung nasa nakaupo, pati 'yung naka --- kahit naman sino na interesado dapat kausapin natin o pag-usapin natin. So that was --- all of us came down on different --- slightly different positions along the entire spectrum of completely kicking out Myanmar from ASEAN and for engaging them fully. Nobody wanted to engage the generals. Nobody wanted to engage the high-level officials. But there are certain --- iba-ibang level of engagement ang kanilang ina-ano, ang kanilang sinasabi.

Now on South China Sea. Everybody, including the Chinese says we follow UNCLOS and the international law. So at least that position of ASEAN is clear. So that has always --- lalo na 'yung mga problems on Taiwan Strait. Sinasabi, karamihan naman sa'min One China Policy. So sinasabi namin,

okay, we are still following the One China Policy but it is --- we just want peace. 'Yun ang aking ano --- sinasabi ko. It is --- we follow the One China Policy, dapat wala kaming --- it's an internal matter. We believe that Taiwan is part of China but you must resolve those issues peacefully. 'Yun lang naman ang hinihingi ng ASEAN. Huwag magkagulo.

So that was the --- that was the essential message to all involved, including the Americans on the West Philippine Sea, South China Sea.

Q: Sir, sorry. One follow-up lang po sana. Sir, are you hopeful after this summit that at least there will be a progress on the code of conduct which you are pushing sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, nothing new actually has happened in terms of the code of conduct. We all just restated over and over again. Kailangan na magkaroon ng code of conduct. Because --- to be very, very clear about what it is that we are agreeing upon, eh kailangan may code of conduct na tayó. So 'yun lang. That's as far as you can go especially pagka ganyan. Paulit-ulit na sa sinabi ko. It is urgent. It is becoming more and more urgent and we really should --- the negotiations and the finalization of the code of conduct. There's been some progress in the past year but we really need to have the actual code of conduct, already finalized and already in place as soon as possible.

Q: Thank you so much, Mr. President.

Q: Hi sir. Good afternoon.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Hi.

Q: Opo. Sir, have you accepted the invitation to attend the World Economic Forum in Switzerland? And also add ko na rin, have you received other invitations for state visits other than from China?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yeah, the --- Klaus Schwab was --- invited me yesterday that we had a very early meeting and sinasabi nga niya that we want to hear the story of the Philippines in Davos. So I am undecided yet. It's travelling too much. That's already the end of January. I'm going to China on the third. Parang --- like my mom says, "kalian ka nag-oopisina?" Which is --- may dahilan din. So I haven't decided. We'll see. The other

thing is about --- the real decision there is really going to be, if we are going to ask people to come to the Philippines, who are going to invest in the Philippines, are we ready for them?

So papunta ka doon sa Davos tapos sasabihin mo pero hindi, huwag muna ngayon, next year pa. 'Di ba? Ba't pa natin gagawin? So 'yun ang --- that's really the determining factor there.

But other --- I've accepted several state visit invitations. Well, China, as you see, I said. Vietnam, Brunei. Actually lahat. Invited --- kasi first time nila ako na... 'Yung iba Thailand, first nila ako makilala. So they've all invited me. Sabi ko, sige, basta ako naman wala akong hinihindian. Sinasabi ko lang 'yung mag-schedule tayo kung kalian libre tayo pareho. That's down the road. Siguro next year, we'll start honoring those invitations.

Q: Good afternoon, sir. Sir, you met with a handful of state leaders during bilateral meetings like South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia. It's a given that you would usually push for stronger cooperation between the said nations.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yes, of course.

Q: But have you formally signed any formal agreement with those countries that would entail gains for the Philippines?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No. That's not the purpose of the bilateral agreements. In my case, because I'm the new kid in town right. So it's to meet people and say, magpakilala, you know. We've had --- I know... Our countries... Like Canada today. I've never met the Prime Minister and he has never met me. But you know we have so many Filipinos in Canada. So talagang importante na masabi ko lang na nagpapasalamat ako kasi maganda ang trato ng mga Canadians sa mga Pilipino at dapat tiyakin natin. Let's make sure that everything will be okay at nag-uusap tayo. And Canada for example, is a particular example kasi ang layo na ng Canada pero sumama sila dito. And I think that's going to be a trend. The United States is across the Pacific, sumama sila dito. So it's really --- it's going to be a trend and you can see that the --- how ASEAN has grown.

Nakakapag-convene na tayo ng Amerikano, nung Ruso, nung China, nung -- - kahit sino na inimbata natin. New Zealand was there today. Australia was there today. Lahat sila pumupunta dahil importanteng importante ang ASEAN. And that just shows you how central really to the economic planning the ASEAN is. And that is why --- that's why we are --- I was --- my first... How do you say my first -- I wouldn't call it a proposal but my first idea was

to say let's go back to --- the status before the pandemic, where the real driver of the global economy was Southeast Asia.

'Yung tinatawag dati noon na emerging economies, wala na --- emerging markets. Wala na ngayon 'yung emerging markets because there are no emerging markets because ang gulo-gulo nga ng --- ang gulo-gulo na ng ekonomiya sa buong mundo. But I said, nonetheless. We still should work to bring ASEAN back to that status in the global economy. So that --- in the... Iba-iba ang subject matter natural. Like for Korea napag-usapan --- lahat napag-usapan namin, especially sa economic cooperation kung ano 'yung ODA na gusto nilang gawin, ano 'yung mga... Well, they have many... South Korea, for example, marami silang contractor na gumagawa ng heavy engineering sa mga malalaking project. So sabi ko damihan natin. And what other... Napag-usapan pa 'yung Korean national na inextradite natin. Pati 'yun, 'yung mga subject na ganun. Lahat 'yun nako-cover 'yun.

So it sets an opportunity for both sides to bring up any subject that you feel is important. And it's important for... Like today, I'm talking to the President of Korea. It's important for me to know 'yan ang concerns nila para pwede nating tingnan kung meron tayong magawa para pagandahin naman 'yung sitwasyon.

So in terms of the bilaterals, you don't really come away from the bilaterals with an agreement or all that. It's just that talagang pakiramdaman muna. Ano ba talagang problema? What do you want? What do I want? What can we do together? What are the things that we cannot do? All of that. That's really what the bilaterals are for.

Q: Exotic food, were you able to taste...?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yeah, last night.

Q: What, what sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Hindi, meron --- meron sila, iba 'yung ano eh. Alam mo, kagaya sa Indonesia. Kagaya... Sa Singapore not so much. Pero dito, pareho 'yung pagkain pero iba.

Q: Sir, ano 'yun?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: 'Yung gala. Pare-pareho, okoy, pero iba 'yung kanilang mga ano. Meron silang puro kakanin pero iba 'yung mga --- meron

silang curry na may mani. Doon yata galing 'yung kare-kare eh. Pero ganun. Naiba. It's not kare-kare, it's --- papunta. Ganun, it's similar to kare-kare but it's different.

Q: What did you like most?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I liked it all. I'm afraid medyo ano ko, I'm an enthusiastic experimental when it comes to food. So yes. And then in the lunches, meron silang mga binibigay para 'yung mga local dishes. So yes, it was... But you know, you don't really eat, especially pag lunch. Hindi ka --- marami kayong... Besides, 'yung lunch namin kami-kami magkasama. Ang daming usapan, hindi na kami kumakain nang masyado.

So... But the gala last night was the time that we were able sit down. And actually they had explanation pa doon sa menu. Pinakunan nga 'ni ano eh, ni First Lady 'yung menu para sabi niya, give us some ideas for when we make a state dinner when the day comes that we have to host something like ASEAN, meron tayong pwedeng tingnan.

So... Yeah. Once you're there kasi, 'yun na lang ang iniisip niyo tapos lahat ng sasabihin mo kailangan isipin mo nang mabuti. Habang nagsasalita 'yung iba, sumusulat ka pa ng speech eh. So it's a little hectic. But...

For me, especially, okay alam ko na. Alam ko na what Thailand is worried about. Alam ko na what Korea is worried about. Alam ko na kung ano 'yung --- ano 'yung mga ugali ng mga leader. Alam ko na kung ano 'yung style nila, ano 'yung gusto nila. So that's really very important. That's why face-to-face is really important. Yeah. So I think it was very much worth it. Pero... Lahat ng mga leader, every day, "Kumusta ka?" "Mr. Prime Minister, how are you doing?" "Tired." "Mr. President, how are you?" "Tired. Getting more and more tired."

Q: How about you sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I'm sorry.

Q: Kayo po?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Ganun din. "Did you get some rest?" "No."

Q: Did you get very tired?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, you know, because what happens --- you're sitting there for what, eight hours, 10 hours, 12 hours, whatever it is. And then you come home, you have to take care of the things that have happened in --- back home. So you don't really go straight to sleep. You don't really eat properly. But you know, it has to be done. It's okay. I mean, you know. Nobody died from honest hard work.

All right. Salamat.

Q: Thank you, sir. Congratulations.

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