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PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.

AT THE KAPIHAN WITH THE MEDIA

[Held at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand | 19 November 2022]

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good afternoon, everyone.

Well, I just thought lang na mag-wrap up nang kaunti dahil nag-adjourn na 'yung APEC earlier today. And I thought it would --- we should take the opportunity to look back on what really --- what were the main events or the main points of discussion really with APEC.

So... My takeaway from having gone to ASEAN and then having gone to APEC is it's very encouraging to see that our partners, mga member countries in terms of ASEAN, and the member economies in terms of APEC, the countries seem to have a great deal of commonality in terms of identifying what the problems are that we face and should be prioritized. Things like climate change, food security, clean energy... And they identified the problems and the solutions seem also to be in parallel with one another.

So that's very encouraging for me kasi at least nag-a-agree tayo at the very start. Nag-a-agree tayo kung ano 'yung dapat tugunan, nag-a-agree kami kung ano 'yung dapat --- nag-a-agree tayo kung ano 'yung dapat ang magiging solusyon, more or less, more or less. Siyempre hindi eksakto parepareho because everybody comes from a slightly different place.

But nonetheless, I find that even the guest, our guest participants, such as France and Saudi Arabia, were of the same mind and understand very clearly where the --- the reasons behind the region's view and perspective on the new economy, the political situation, geopolitical situation, and all that. It is very, very useful to have come.

Unang-una, I have met already the majority of the leaders around the region. We have also had a substantive discussions sa mga bilateral. Kaya't mabuti naman at naipaliwang nila sa Pilipinas kung ano 'yung mga kanilang pinaplano, naipaliwanag naman ng Pilipinas sa lahat na kung ano 'yung ating mga iniisip, 'yung mga inaalala, ano 'yung ating gustong unahin, at kung ano'ng maitutulong namin sa kanila at maitutulong nila sa atin.

So that's more or less how the APEC Summit went.

Q: Good afternoon, Mr. President. You will be meeting with US Vice President Kamala Harris this week. What's your reaction that the US Vice President will visit Palawan, the province nearest to the South China Sea? Are you concerned that her visit there will further fuel the tensions between the Philippines and China?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No. I don't see why they should. She is in the Philippines and she is visiting another part of the Philippines.

And of course, it is the closest area to the South China Sea, but it's very clearly on Philippine territory. So I don't think there should be --- I don't think it will cause problems.

Q: Just a quick follow-up, Mr. President. What issues will you raise during your meeting with the US Vice President?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, it's not necessarily issues to be raised but really I have always said that the relationship between the United States and the Philippines must continue to evolve, and it will be that.

Well, things have changed. How do we... What will the United States do in response, and what do they expect from their partners in the region.

I think the --- when it comes to the security and defense in the Asia Pacific, it really has to be --- it really has to be a joint response. I don't think a single country should --- I don't think any single country should [go?] it alone. I think we will do much better if we respond as a group, and I think the other countries agree.

Q: Good afternoon, Mr. President. The 2022 Joint Declaration was just released a few minutes ago. And it made mention of the impact of Russia's war on Ukraine, particularly it said most economies are condemning the war and that they demand the full withdrawal of Russia in Ukraine. I just like to ask, what was your position there, what issues did you raise?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: The Philippines' position has been made very clear in the UN, in the UN votes and wherein we talked about self-determination and peace.

We continue to believe that and the --- all we --- for the Philippines, I kept reminding everyone that our national policy --- our foreign policy rather, our foreign policy is based on the national interest and peace.

And that's our guide. And I think that people understand this very well, we -- that the enemy to none friend to all policy still applies. And so that... We are still trying to --- we are maintaining that.

However, peace is the --- while war rather is unacceptable and we ask all parties involved. There were several speeches that I made all of them included urging that peace be brought back to Ukraine and that the confrontation be brought to the diplomatic space.

Wala ng gulo at... Because the effect is not solely upon Ukraine or Russia. I think it's very clear. It was made even clearer here in APEC how the effects have been so far-reaching and profound, and to the detriment of many economies and the food supply of everyone in the world.

So 'yun ang talagang --- we have to stop the fighting and we have to move on to diplomacy so that we at least, these other aspects of the Ukrainian and Russian economy can be productive again.

Q: Good afternoon, sir. Sir, let's talk about oil. You had a bilateral meeting with China and Russia as well --- ah sorry, not Russia but Saudi Arabia. But were there --- but did you manage to forge deals, at least in the initial stage, with regard to the possible cheaper oil supply for the Philippines? And when will the Saudi Crown Prince come to the Philippines? Will it be a State Visit?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, the discussion actually was mostly about our labor force and the different --- hindi naman issues but 'yung kanyang --- si MBS, what was his prediction on how the development will go forward in Saudi Arabia.

And pinagbigyan nga tayo. I think you may have heard the announcement that the 'yung mga --- there are 12,000 claimants. 'Yung mga claimant na 'yun ay nagke-claim nung kanilang sahod na hindi nabayaran nung pandemya dahil nalugi 'yung kanilang pinagtatrabahuhan na kompanya. Wala silang makuha. But Saudi Arabia agreed, the government itself agreed to pay those claimants para naman mayroon silang...

So that was the first --- that was one of the first things we spoke about. But then, the Crown Prince, Prime Minister, went on to talk about the plans of Saudi Arabia to expand its economy.

And I went back, sinabi ko nga noong after the 1973 oil crisis, the building boom of Saudi Arabia was the one that instigated the new surge of OFWs. And he immediately stopped me and he said, "That's not a building boom. The one that's coming is the building boom. That's nothing compared to what we are going to do. So we will need more workers." And so that's another opportunity for us.

We talked about oil a little bit. We talked about petroleum products primarily fertilizer, but also oil and in terms of oil supply.

So we will --- kailangan pa natin lakarin ito. I reminded the Prime Minister, the Crown Prince that in the '70s, ako 'yung pinapadala nung aking ama noong para makipag-negotiate sa Saudi Arabia noong panahon ng oil

minister nila si Sheikh Zaki Yamani. And naging --- nakilala ko at I would travel with him para lang makakuha tayo ng concessions so --- sa Saudi Arabia para sa Pilipinas.

Sabi niya, well we can discuss it again, discuss it again. So babalikan natin lahat 'yun. So there was not – in terms of that. Labor, may mga specifics talaga.

Pero sa fuel, oil supply, we touched upon it, but we just have to pursue it further. 'Yung fertilizer mukhang mas madali, baka mayroon tayong makuha sa kanila.

Q: Sir, 'yung State Visit po?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I'm sorry?

Q: 'Yung visit to the Philippines?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, sinabi ko sa kanya na kailangan niyang makabisita. And he surprised us all, he said, "Yes, I have to because my second mother comes from the Philippines."

Mayroon siyang ganoon. Ang opening nga niya sabi niya, wala --- there is no Saudi Arabian who does not have a Filipino friend somewhere down the line. And I guess totoo 'yun dahil talagang we have been part --- we have become part really of their society and workforce.

Q: Thank you, sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thank you.

Q: Good afternoon, Mr. President. The Chinese Foreign Ministry released a statement after your meeting with President Xi that the Philippines and China should reject acts of bullying in the region. What should be done to prevent bullying, especially in the South China Sea? And what do you constitute as acts of bullying?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, I suppose maybe the term bullying is not exactly accurate but I would characterize it as something different.

I would say that as part of our foreign policy and this is something again that I spoke to our other partners with, what we really should pursue is that we should make sure that we in the region are the ones who will decide the future of the region.

Hindi tayo nag... Huwag nating pabayaang dinidiktahan tayo ng kahit sino. Maybe that's what the Chinese were referring to.

But that's essentially what the --- that has always been my formulation. That's why it begins with being able to engage with everyone, from either side of any conflict, still being able to engage on both sides.

That is... So that we can determine... That's why these meetings, these summits are so important because we can come to a common position.

And it is how it should be. It is us in ASEAN, it is us in Asia who should decide. Australia kasama because they really consider themselves part of Asia.

It should be us in Asia who decides the future of Asia, the Asia-Pacific region, the Indo-Pacific region. Dapat ang mga tiga-doon ang magkukumpas kung saan ang takbo ng region na 'yan.

Q: Hi good afternoon, sir. You've met several global leaders here in Bangkok, Thailand. Can we just have a rundown, what countries have invited you to visit their countries and which invitation have you accepted?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: What countries have invited me? All. What countries will I accept? All. *[laughter]* Kaya marami pa tayong ganito.

Q: Can you name some, sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, all of them. I spoke to President Macron, I spoke to the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Albanese of Australia, and --- ah yeah, si Jacinda Ardern. Idol natin 'yun.

I kept telling her, "You know, you were a beacon of light during the pandemic." She says, "I didn't realize, I was in a bubble." Sabi ko well you know simply because when we didn't know what to do, you were very decisive and you provided leadership. I think that's the most important.

So yes, again, for New Zealand... Lahat talaga, actually lahat. Even in the ASEAN. Vietnam also. Vietnam also because we have so many connections already at least on the private sector side with Vietnam.

So I'd like to go to them all at some point. Pero you know the scheduling, I have to go back to Manila at marami rin kaming kailangan ayusin at tapusin.

It's always very useful. Like for example, it's really actually surprising, France, Canada, malalayo na ito, but they come. Russia even, United States, they come because it is well recognized that the Asia-Pacific region is still going to be the driver of the global economy, which starting already again.

And as things calm down, the pandemic goes away, hopefully the Ukraine conflict is at least have brought to peace, 'pag nangyari na 'yun, you will see that I think I'm confident when I say that this area will be the ones that will be the driving force.

Nahihirapan ang US to recover, the EU, the European countries are having very much difficult with the situation with Russia.

Even... Maybe the Middle East also kasi medyo matibay-tibay ang kanilang mga ekonomiya. So between the Middle East and the Asia Pacific, I think this will be the --- this will be the economic poles as we move forward.

All right. Thank you! Maraming salamat!

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