

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**INTERVENTION OF PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
AT THE 43RD ASEAN SUMMIT PLENARY
5 September 2023**

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Your Majesty,
Excellencies,

Allow me to first all welcome to ASEAN, the Prime Minister of Cambodia, Prime Minister Hun Manet. We look forward to the continuing contribution of Cambodia to ASEAN in all [inaudible] that we are facing jointly. I also would like to welcome the Prime Minister of Timor Leste, Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão. And allow me to express once again the continuing support of the Philippines for your eventual full membership in ASEAN.

Your Majesty,
Excellencies,

Our strength as a regional organization is nowhere more pronounced than when we effectively deliver and follow-through on our commitments.

With a projected growth rate of 4.9% next year and a steady rise in intra-ASEAN trade and foreign direct investment inflows, ASEAN is poised to improve its macroeconomic fundamentals in the face of a prolonged geopolitical and socio-economic challenge that impacts our region and the world.

To this end, the Philippines will always continue to strive to maintain ASEAN as a competitive and integrated regional economy.

Key to our integration efforts is facilitating a rules-based multilateral trading system that is open, free, and fair. To further expand mutual trade, we should continue efforts at enhancing ASEAN connectivity and supply chains.

We remain optimistic that RCEP will not only widen our options to increase production and ultimately strengthen supply-chain resiliency, but also provide a new space for our economies to participate in the global value chain.

Excellencies,

Our growth only matters when it is inclusive.

The digital transformation of the economy, borne out of necessity, granted us the opportunity to overcome geographic limitations to deepen economic integration.

The interoperability of our systems, in terms of digital trade, digital payments, and the like, should foster a vibrant digital economy that is interconnected as it is secure.

Let us bolster support for the increased participation of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and start-ups in the digital and creative economies.

Creativity and innovation are the way to the future. Let us strengthen collaboration and align our policies, including establishing a regional scope of the creative economy, closing financing gaps, and managing digital readiness capacities.

Always at the heart of our Community-building should be our people.

We must continue to prepare our people, especially the marginalized and the vulnerable, such as the women and the persons with disabilities in business, for the digital future. The citizens of ASEAN should reskill and upskill to maintain their leading roles in our economies.

Let us ensure that our digital infrastructure enables broad and uninterrupted access, as the provision of our public services has shifted to digital platforms.

Improving access to safe and secure digital learning opportunities, fostering digital literacy, and developing transferable skills in ASEAN will therefore remain our priority.

Excellencies,
Your Majesty,

We must be ready to assist those who have toiled to contribute significantly to our economies: as our migrant workers.

In this regard, the Philippines stands ready to lead and support efforts to operationalize the ASEAN Guidelines on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations. Our policies to protect migrant workers should provide assistance across all stages of crisis preparedness, response, and recovery.

As the Voluntary Lead Shepherd for the cooperation against Trafficking in Persons, the Philippines will continue to call for more concerted efforts in intensifying regional and international cooperation, especially in mobilizing resources to prevent and combat the abuse of technology in TIP. We look forward to operationalizing the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Combating Trafficking in Persons Caused by the Abuse of Technology.

Excellencies,

The most urgent threat to our progress is the impact of climate change. It is a looming reminder of the injustice of disproportionate impact on our people.

At the upcoming COP28, ASEAN must call on developed countries to heighten the implementation of their commitments. Their commitments that include climate finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity building, in order to drive ASEAN's capabilities to prevent, mitigate, manage, and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

As one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, the Philippines will continue to prioritize international cooperation that will make ASEAN climate-smart and disaster-ready, including through the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity.

In achieving food security, we must build on cooperation that will harness the transformative potential of our agricultural sector to ensure that food production is responsible and will be of benefit for future generations.

The continued effectiveness of our Community-building efforts rests on a clear assessment of our strengths.

The Philippines will continue to champion for change that will strengthen our institutions, improve our decision-making, and uphold ASEAN Centrality.

To this end,

It is my pleasure to announce that the Philippines is ready to take the helm and chair ASEAN in 2026. We will fortify the foundations of our Community-building and navigate ASEAN as it embarks on a new chapter. We will count on the support of fellow Member States and continue to work with our partners to strengthen ASEAN Centrality, and to promote peace, security, stability, and prosperity in the region.

Finally,

I would like to thank and congratulate Indonesia and President Joko Widodo for Indonesia's most able leadership and warm hospitality as the Chair of ASEAN this year.

And I look forward to next year's Summits with Lao PDR as our Chair.

Thank you and Mabuhay.

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