**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE**

**PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**OPENING REMARKS BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.**

**AT THE PHILIPPINES-AUSTRALIA** **EXPANDED BILATERAL MEETING**

[State Dining Room, Malacañan Palace | 8 September 2023]

Well, allow me to once again welcome you, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia and your delegation, to Manila, to the Palace, and to the Philippines.

And it is particularly --- we are particularly happy to see the leader of Australia here, as it has been good long 20 years since the last visit from Australia, from the Australian leader here to the Philippines.

But once again, I think we find ourselves --- I think the Australian shift, maybe a decade or two ago in saying that Australia’s future is with Asia has really been --- has really become a reality and that’s why the closeness between our countries, between Australia and the Philippines is terribly important.

We have solid bases here because absent all diplomatic, trade, et cetera agreements, the people-to-people exchanges between our two countries has been significant over the years.

And once again, the Filipino nationals who live in Australia, and have chosen to go and live and work there have been --- are very happy to have been assimilated properly into Australian society and for that we are very grateful. Thank you very much for that.

And may I just add a word of thanks to you, Mr. Prime Minister, for the strong support that you have made for the Philippines, especially during the past ASEAN conference, where you have made very clear that the claims that are being made upon Philippine maritime territory are not valid and have not been recognized and not in conjunction or consistent with international law.

And to have friends like you and partners like you, especially on that subject is very gratifying and encourages us to continue down that path. So, we thank you for that.

And, once again, welcome to the Philippines.

**--- END ---**