

**ARRIVAL STATEMENT BY**  
**PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.**  
**UPON HIS RETURN FROM THE**  
**ASEAN-GCC SUMMIT**

[Delivered at the Maharlika in Villamor Air Base in Pasay City | 21 October 2023]

Thank you, Sec. Manny Bonoan. *[Please take your seats.]*

Members of the Cabinet that are here present; of course, our host the Pasay City Lone District Representative Antonino Calixto and the Pasay City Mayor Imelda Calixto-Rubiano; AFP Chief of Staff General Romy Brawner; the Major Service Commanders here today; our newly appointed Coast Guard Admiral Gavan who is here – who has joined us for the first time; PNP Chief General Benjie Acorda; fellow workers in government; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

I have arrived back from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia after a very short but I can say successful and productive visit.

The ASEAN-GCC Summit is a landmark event. And this happened for the first time where leaders from both ASEAN and the GCC States met and discussed regional and international issues and agreed upon the future of cooperation between our two regional organizations.

The Summit provided an opportunity to project the Philippines' long-standing promotion of a rules-based international order, which is essential to the maintenance of peace, security, and stability in our regions which sit astride two of the most vibrant sea-lanes of trade and communications in the world.

I highlighted, in particular, the ways that we can collaborate in the areas of energy, food security, and the enhancement of logistic chains for the continued progress of our [interdependent] global economy. I underscored in this regard our commitment to the full implementation of the ASEAN-GCC Framework of Cooperation for 2024 to 2028.

With the GCC countries home to more than 2 million hardworking Filipinos, I of course called for the safeguarding of their rights and of their welfare, as

well as for their upskilling so as to meet the demands of the increasing digital transformation in the modern workplace.

The Summit also provided ASEAN and GCC Leaders an opportunity to convey their views on the ongoing conflict in Israel and Gaza.

I shared our hope for peace that it should prevail and for the welfare and safety of civilians to be upheld in accordance with international humanitarian law.

During the Saudi-Philippines Business Roundtable Meeting, we witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between EEI Corporation and Samsung Engineering NEC Co. Ltd. (SENEC). SENEK is a joint venture between Samsung Engineering and Al Rushaid Petroleum Investment Corporation (ARPIC).

Under this agreement, a 500-person capacity training facility will be established in the Philippines to upskill Filipino employees in various professions in the construction industry. The facility aims to train at least 3,000 Filipinos a year and more than 15,000 Filipinos in the next 5 years, ready for deployment with their newfound skills. This agreement is valued at USD 120 million.

The DTI also reported three other business-to-business agreements that were discussed among Saudi and Philippine human resource companies for the training and employment of Filipinos across a wide range of industries including healthcare; hotel and restaurant and catering; maintenance and operations, amongst other operations.

These agreements are expected to generate more than USD 4.2 billion and an additional 220,000 jobs for Filipinos over the next few years.

I certainly enjoyed once again the vibrant Filipino community of Riyadh. I assured our *kababayans* of our continued support and assistance of the Philippine Government in their sacrifices that they have made for the country and for their families, and that we will continue to support them in any way that they need.

I also met with the Kuwaiti Crown Prince at the sidelines of the Summit. And at that very quick, very short meeting, we agreed to continue to discuss some

of the obstacles in our relationship in terms of the bans that we had imposed for employment. And he was very, very effusive in saying that we should remove all of those and we should continue as we had done before, which is a very important development because for a few months now, we have had to ban the deployment of Filipino workers in Kuwait. Now that will end, we will now return to the normal state of affairs with the Kuwaiti government. And in fact, they have moved very quickly. They have already started discussions at the ministerial level, at the ambassadorial level as well.

Finally, I had the opportunity to meet the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia. We exchanged views on issues of common concern to our two countries, and I expressed hope that we can sustain the momentum of high-level exchanges as we expand cooperation in key areas of mutual benefit to our people.

It was very encouraging because the Crown Prince made it very clear that the Filipinos that are working in Saudi Arabia, and we are approximately 760,000 and we will soon be approaching close to a million, and this only in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It was very encouraging because the Crown Prince made it very clear to me that the Filipinos will play a very important part in the continuing growth of their economy. And there is a new aspect to our relationship with Saudi Arabia. Whereas before essentially it was just for employment and we sent our people, our OFWs, now, they have extended that relationship and say that it is time that they bring investment to the Philippines and to support their food supply situation and to support the industries that they are going to expand and they are going to establish. Whereas before you could have said – you could have described it as a one-way street, we were sending workers to Saudi Arabia, now, it will be more of a two-way street. We will send -- certainly continue to send our workers to Saudi Arabia but they will also, for their part, come to the Philippines and invest, make capital investments here in the Philippines as they see ASEAN and the Philippines, in particular, as a very – as an area of very good potential for the development and transformation of their economy.

So, let me assure you that we will continue to advance our national interests as we further expand our partnerships abroad.

*Maraming salamat. Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat. Mabuhay po tayong lahat. [applause]*

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