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**ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. TO THE PARLIAMENT OF  
AUSTRALIA ON BAYANIHAN AND MATESHIP: THE PHILIPPINES AND AUSTRALIA'S  
ENDURING FRIENDSHIP AND COMMON ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

[Delivered at the Chamber of House of Representatives in Canberra, Australia |  
29 February 2024]

The Honorable Prime Minister Anthony Albanese; the Honorable President of the Senate Sue Lines; the Honorable Speaker Milton Dick; the Honorable Leader of the Opposition Mr. Peter Dutton; Honorable Senators; members of Parliament, allow me to also greet the 48 Honorable Members of the Philippines- Australia Parliamentary Group that are present with us here today; ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

Allow me to begin, Mister Speaker, by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, and to pay my respects to their elders, past and present.

I also extend my respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that are with us here today.

The First Lady and I are delighted to be in Canberra. We are grateful to Governor General David Hurley for his invitation to us as Guests of Government.

As President of a proud and free country, few other honors surpass this opportunity to address one of democracy's most august institutions: the Parliament of Australia.

The long-standing friendship between our two great nations transcends the 78 years of our formal diplomatic relations.

It is anchored on deep bonds of mutual respect and fond affection which find concrete expression today, the rich contributions of more than 400,000 Filipinos to Australia, comprising the fifth largest migrant community in your country today.

These bonds trace their roots as far back as the 1860s when Filipino pearl divers, known to you then as the Manilamen, found their way to your shores as early purveyors of globalization.

These Manilamen contributed to the Australian economy. They enriched Australian life. And most importantly, they sparked meaningful connections that have endured through generations.

When our two nations faced common danger in 1942, Filipino soldiers fought valiantly in Bataan and Corregidor. They faced the impossible task of holding back the enemy's advance, and yet we did.

These efforts helped keep Australia safe. And in return, a grateful Australian people provided temporary refuge for the wartime Filipino leadership. And, at the most crucial moment, Australian airmen, sailors, and soldiers fought side by side with Filipinos as we, together with our allies, turned the tide of war.

Just as Filipinos lost lives to keep Australians safe at the onset of war, so did Australians offer their lives to restore freedom in the Philippines at the dawn of peace.

As allies, we engaged actively in shaping the free world's vision for the postwar order. We worked to ensure that the new peace would respect the rights of all nations. As founding members of the United Nations, we turned that vision into reality.

From the very beginning, we knew that our interests were intertwined. The security of Australia is bound with the security of the Philippines. When my father accompanied Prime Minister Whitlam on a sentimental tour of Bataan and Corregidor in 1974, they reaffirmed that core principle.

When I signed our Strategic Partnership with Prime Minister Albanese last September, we marked a milestone in our deliberate and steady effort to build opportunities for our peoples, while contributing to regional peace.

All of these further affirm what our two peoples have already forged through many centuries. I look back on our shared history to contextualize the role that our respective nations played and continue today to play at this watershed moment.

Geopolitical polarities and strategic competitions threaten our hard-won peace, even as we remain beset by unresolved inequities and inequalities within and amongst nations.

Powerful and transformative technologies can destabilize our political and social order. Climate change threatens our very existence.

These tectonic shifts are acutely felt in the Indo-Pacific.

It has become crucial for us now to envision the shape, the breadth, and the depth of our Strategic Partnership and how it must move forward as we weather the storms of global volatility.

I see the way forward in building on the strong ties that have already been established between our citizens, between our economies, between our Governments.

Today, we add a further dimension to that relationship as we address concerns on our security and defense.

We are called upon once again to join forces, together with our partners, in the face of threats to the rule of law, to stability, and to peace.

For the Philippines, Australia plays a crucial role as one of only two partners with which the Philippines has a Visiting Forces Agreement.

In August of last year, I witnessed Exercise Alon, our bilateral amphibious activity involving 560 Filipino soldiers, 1,200 Australian servicemen, and 120 U.S. marines.

Last November, we welcomed the inaugural Maritime Cooperative Activity between Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Australian Defense Force in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

Let this just be the beginning.

Your leaders have always taken the position that the destiny of Australia is irrevocably linked to the destiny of Asia. Over the years, you have held true to this tenet. You have become a valuable member of Asia and of the Indo-Pacific community.

Our two countries have always understood that without the predictability and stability of our rules-based order, our region would not have emerged as the driver of the global economy as it is today.

We have long known that our prosperity and development are anchored on the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific.

Today, that peace, that stability, and our continued success, have come under threat.

Once again, we must come together as partners to face the common challenges confronting the region. Not one single country can do this by itself. No single force alone can counter them by themselves.

This is why our Strategic Partnership has grown more important than ever.

We must reinforce each other's strengths. We must protect the peace that we fought for during the war and have jealously guarded in the decades since. We must oppose actions that clearly denigrate the rule of law.

As in 1942, the Philippines now finds itself on the frontline against actions that undermine regional peace, erode regional stability, and threaten regional success.

Then as now, we remain firm in defending our sovereignty, our sovereign rights, our jurisdiction.

I shall never tire of repeating the declaration that I made from the first day that I took office: I will not allow any attempt by any foreign power to take even one square inch of our sovereign territory.

The challenges that we face may be formidable, but equally formidable is our resolve.

We will not yield.

Then as now, the security and continued prosperity of the region – of countries like Australia – relies upon that effort.

Just as we fought to build our rules-based international order, so are we now fighting to protect it.

The protection of the South China Sea as a vital, critical global artery is crucial to the preservation of regional peace and, I daresay, of global peace.

We have an abiding interest in keeping our seas free and open and in ensuring unimpeded passage and freedom of navigation. We must uphold, preserve, and defend the unified and universal character of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the constitution of the oceans.

We draw strength from the consistent and unequivocal support of Australia and the international community for the lawful exercise of our rights, which have been settled under international law.

And so, on behalf of the Filipino people, I thank you, Australia, for standing with the Republic of the Philippines.

Ladies and gentlemen, we demonstrate the depth and breadth of our security cooperation through regular exchanges between our armed forces and our coast guards, including in the areas of maritime security, counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief.

We collaborate to strengthen and seek new business links, to bolster our economic security, and to develop responses to economic coercion.

We work together to promote and enhance the flow of environmentally sustainable investment and to explore cooperation on mineral resources development and climate and energy transition, amongst others.

Indeed, we have made good progress since we signed our Strategic Partnership last year.

Ultimately, our partnership finds its anchor in our common commitment to ensuring that this region keeps to the path of peace, builds resilience, remains focused on delivering dividends to our citizens and our communities.

Beyond our bilateral horizon, we project the commitment in our continued adherence to ASEAN Centrality, which we will have the opportunity to reaffirm at the Special Summit between ASEAN and Australia in Melbourne next week.

Beyond the region, we project this commitment, too, in our partnership and active leadership on the international stage. We collaborate closely with Australia to strengthen international security and universal adherence to international humanitarian law.

I salute Prime Minister Albanese's personal commitment to our vision of a world free of nuclear weapons. It is a commitment that is shared by all peoples of Southeast Asia with those of Australia and the Pacific Island States.

Through the treaties of Bangkok and Rarotonga, our two regions serve as pockets of freedom from these destructive weapons. Within the ambit of the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, our two countries are champions of nuclear disarmament and advocates for nuclear risk reduction.

In the context of emerging technologies such as autonomous weapon systems, and of new frontiers such as outer space and cyberspace, there is much room for our two countries to work together.

Our collaboration in the United Nations demonstrates the need to continue to build bridges and to forge consensus towards decisive multilateral solutions.

We cannot allow geopolitics to paralyze global governance.

Now, more than ever, we need multilateralism to work. This is particularly important given the scope of global cooperation needed to address our most pressing vulnerability – one that threatens the very survival of our peoples, one that threatens our very future.

I speak, of course, of climate change.

My country accepts its part in our collective responsibility. My administration is committed to accelerating our just, affordable, sustainable, and inclusive energy transition towards carbon neutrality.

The Philippines has the potential to be a net carbon sink, absorbing more carbon dioxide than we emit. Yet, we are one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, ranking first in the 2023 World Risk Index.

This glaring disproportion between our share of responsibility and our vulnerability reflects an injustice that must be corrected. Developed countries must do more. And they must do it now.

Our past successes should inspire us to forge ahead in building the future to which we aspire.

For the Philippines, we continue to see that future in our identity as Asians and as members of the Pacific family.

Together with our Asian neighbors – and in that group I include Australia – we continue to work for a regional community that empowers all of our citizens.

As Asians, we are committed to fulfilling our region's promise as a global engine of growth, and in remaining true to our shared value of mutual respect, our shared desire to flourish through our diversity.

As part of the Pacific, we carry in our very DNA the heritage of seafaring civilizations that spanned two oceans. This manifests in the high regard our cultures place on family, on community, and on the environment.

In Australia we see not only a strong democracy, but an indispensable part of our Pacific community, a permanent stakeholder in the future of Asia, and a reliable supporter of ASEAN Centrality.

In Australia we see a natural partner in our efforts to defend, to preserve, to uphold our open, inclusive, and rules-based international order, to ensure that it remains governed by international law and informed by the principles of equity and justice.

In Australia we see a lifelong friend with whom we have endured joint sacrifices, reveled in our shared victories, and now pursue common aspirations.

All these inspires confidence in the future of our Strategic Partnership.

This confidence is shared not only by our two Governments, but also by our two peoples.

We see this in the face of the almost 35,000 Filipino students who choose Australian schools to pursue their respective endeavors, the fifth largest foreign student population in Australia.

We see this, too, in the nearly 30,000 Australians who work and live with us, and have chosen to call the Philippines their home.

We see this, more importantly, in the spirit of bayanihan and mateship that defines our relationship.

Our mateship brought Australians to Tacloban, my mother's hometown, to bring relief in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Haiyan in 2013.

Our bayanihan brought closure and peace to the families of the gallant Australians that perished in the sinking of Montevideo Maru in 1942.

And this is the same spirit that now brings our sailors, our airmen, and soldiers together, shoulder-to-shoulder, in defending our rights and in securing our common future.

For when the Southern Cross met the Pearl of the Orient, a friendship blossomed, withstood the test of war, and flourished through changes brought about by a world in flux.

Looking ahead, I am confident that Filipinos and Australians will remain steadfast partners, unyielding and uncompromising in our shared values, and energized as we gird ourselves to work together in the spirit of bayanihan and of mateship.

Thank you. Mabuhay!

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