

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE**

**PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**INTERVENTION OF PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. FOR THE  
44<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN SUMMIT (PLENARY)**

[09 October 2024]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Allow me to join my colleagues with the thanks to Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone and Lao PDR for the very fine arrangements that you have made for this 44<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit.

I also would like to welcome to the ASEAN family Prime Minister Lawrence Wong of Singapore, and Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who are attending their first ASEAN Summit.

ASEAN's prospects remain robust. Growth in our region is outpacing global forecasts, thanks to the dynamic strength of our region and the steps we have undertaken under the stewardship of Lao PDR this year to enhance our connectivity and our resilience.

This success should inspire us to tackle – to continue to tackle the other complex challenges ahead.

We must continue to deepen our connectivity and fortify our resilience to ensure that we are prepared for emerging challenges and for future shocks.

One of the significant catalysts for connectivity in ASEAN is the digital economy. We should lay the groundwork for a safe and trusted digital environment that can propel ASEAN into a new era of innovation, growth, and opportunity. With the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) poised to boost our region's digital economy to USD 2 trillion by 2030, it is critical that we invest in robust cybersecurity protections, equip our people with digital skills, and build the digital infrastructure necessary to secure ASEAN's path to becoming the fourth largest economy in the world.

There are over 70 million Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises across ASEAN, accounting for up to 99% of all businesses in the region. These enterprises are the backbone

of our economies. We commend the Chair's initiatives in supporting our MSMEs. Addressing financing gaps, supporting digitalization, and enhancing the capacities of MSMEs that will enable our MSMEs to integrate into global value chains and become key drivers of regional growth.

Amidst the persistent challenges to our food security caused by supply chain disruptions, economic shocks, and the increasing intensity of extreme weather events such as El Niño and La Niña, we must adopt sustainable agricultural practices to optimize our food systems.

We must support efforts that empower and support our farming communities and leverage agricultural technological innovations.

On tourism, the Philippines is proud to lead the development of ASEAN's regional tourism action plans which will promote ASEAN's rich culture and heritage, and promote inclusive and sustainable tourism across our region.

While connectivity strengthens the bonds that bind our Community, resilience ensures that ASEAN can endure and adapt to the challenges that may arise.

The biggest threat to humanity and the future of ASEAN is climate change. Our region remains one of the most vulnerable to climate change, and our resilience will continue to be tested by this perennial challenge.

The Board of the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage, which the Philippines is proud to play host to, provides a crucial mechanism in facilitating the flow of climate finance to countries which are most vulnerable to climate change.

We hope that our hosting will focus more attention in the Asia-Pacific region, where many countries struggle with limited resources in responding to the effects of climate change.

As part of our efforts to bolster cooperation on disaster risk reduction and management, the Philippines will be hosting the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in October. This gathering will bring together stakeholders from across the region to strengthen cooperation, share best practices, and develop policies to help mitigate the devastating effects of natural disasters, especially those exacerbated by climate change.

ASEAN must likewise focus on the intersection of climate change and biodiversity. Protecting our rich biodiversity is essential to maintaining the ecosystems that support all of our life. To this end, the Philippines has increased its funding of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity by 25 percent this year, in order to support efforts on the conservation and management of the region's biological diversity.

Women empowerment and gender equality will continue to be a priority of ASEAN in the years to come. I cannot emphasize enough how significant the role of women is in ASEAN Community-building, especially in peacebuilding initiatives.

Women's unique perspectives and experiences are critical to building a just and lasting peace.

The Philippines is hosting an International Conference on Women, Peace, and Security in Manila this October. In line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the Philippines seeks to advance efforts that would ensure that women are at the forefront of peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding.

As we chart the path forward for our region, let us harness to the fullest the strength of our external relationships, which play a pivotal role in enriching ASEAN Community-building.

We will continuously strengthen our engagement with our external partners to reinforce ASEAN Centrality, promote mutual trust, and to uphold a rules-based international order that safeguards peace, stability, security, and prosperity for all.

Thank you.

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