

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

**MALACAÑANG PRESS BRIEFING HOSTED BY MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ WITH
SENATOR FRANCIS TOLENTINO, NATIONAL MARITIME COUNCIL SPOKESPERSON
UNDERSECRETARY ALEXANDER LOPEZ, DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY MARSHALL LOUIS ALFEREZ, NATIONAL MAPPING AND
RESOURCE INFORMATION AUTHORITY (NAMRIA) ADMINISTRATOR PETER TIANGCO,
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE SENIOR STATE COUNCIL, ATTORNEY FRETTI GANCHOON,
AND PANGASINAN 3RD DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE MARIA RACHEL ARENAS
NOVEMBER 8, 2024 [10:04 A.M. – 10:49 A.M.]**

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Good morning, Malacañang Press Corps, and welcome to our press briefing today, November 8.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. led the ceremonial signing of the Philippine Maritime Zones Act and the Philippine Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act. The Philippine Maritime Zones Act will enable our country to maximize the rights and benefits of our maritime areas under the Philippine Constitution and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea or UNCLOS. Further, the Philippine Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act designates our sea lanes that will facilitate safe passage of foreign ships and aircrafts while obliging them to comply with our procedures.

To elaborate on these new laws on maritime security, we are joined by Senator Francis Tolentino, National Maritime Council Spokesperson Undersecretary Alexander Lopez, Department of Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Marshall Louis Alferez, National Mapping and Resource Information Authority Administrator Peter Tiangco, Senior State Council of the Department of Justice, Atty. Fretti Ganchoon, and Pangasinan 3rd District Representative Maria Rachel Arenas.

Good morning. Let us start with Senator Tolentino. Senator...

SEN. TOLENTINO: Well, masaya kami ngayon kasi finally twin laws passed, signed and these are all very, very significant, historical na just sheer but for generations ahead, years ahead because these laws – one, Maritime Zone Law would really enshrine, domesticate in our Philippine laws what we obtain through the 2016 arbitral ruling; number two, for the first time, we're now legislating the name "West Philippine Sea" and we're now making reference to the eastern portion as "Talampas ng Pilipinas" formerly known as the Benham Rise, later named as the Philippine Rise – now, Talampas ng Pilipinas.

And now, we're also making the exact metes and bounds of our territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone all the way to the deep seabed with all the rights that would be recognized if we submit this in due time to the United Nations.

And the second law, the Archipelagic Sea Lanes Law is a progeny of the first law which is also relevant because we will now be dedicating three sea lanes – one, from the Celebes area; number two, to the Sibutu area; number three, to the Balintang Channel – where all foreign vessels would be allowed to traverse as well as the utilization of overflight by aircraft on the basis of the Chicago Convention.

And all of these will also be submitted to the International Maritime Organization as well as the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) and I look forward to the day when we... while onboard an aircraft coming overseas, when the pilot would announce that, "*We are now entering the West Philippine Sea. Please fasten your seatbelt.*" And likewise, be shown in front of the passenger's screen would be a map naming that area as West Philippine Sea.

So, talagang nakakalugod ito dahil ito ay pagpapakita ng isang paninindigan ng isang bansa base po sa Saligang Batas, bale base po sa international law. At ang daming tumulong – si Congresswoman Arenas, ang Department of Justice, ang mga academe buhat sa pribadong sektor at buhat sa ibang bansa as resource persons. And coming at a time when we commemorate an event that was likewise significant, the Yolanda experience more than a decade ago, ito iyong pagbangon natin - nakabangon na ang Tacloban, nakabangon na ang Leyte. Ito naman ngayon, pagpapakilala naman ng ating matatag na soberanya. Iyong paglagda ngayong araw na ito noong dalawang batas – (RA) 12064 Maritime Zones Law; Republic Act 12065, the Archipelagic Sea Lanes Law.

Maraming salamat po.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Senator Tolentino. Next, we'll hear from Congresswoman Arenas.

REP. ARENAS: Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat. Thank you so much for this opportunity. First of all, I want to thank the President from the time that he was elected, he was fighting for this and this is one of his priorities. I also want to thank the Speaker and all the members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and, of course, my champion in the senate, Senator Tolentino.

Sa pagpasa nitong batas na ito, we could now effectively implement our domestic laws and international laws to protect our marine and fish resources, and also to conserve our marine environment. At the same time, doon sa ating Archipelagic Sea Lanes, nasabi na po naman lahat ni Senator Tolentino that it would protect our national integrity and security.

Nagpapasalamat din ako sa lahat po ng mga ahensiya, to the task force, to Atty. Fretti, to everybody who really for many, many years – actually for how many decades fighting for this bill and I'm just very thankful that during my term as Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, we were able to pass these two very, very significant bills and this actually for the country, for the Filipino people.

And, again, I have to salute the President again because sa lahat ng paglalakbay niya sa ibang bansa, pinaglalaman niya iyong sariling atin. That's all. Thank you.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Congresswoman Arenas. Next, we'll be hearing from Undersecretary Lopez.

NMC USEC. LOPEZ: Thank you very much. Actually, I will be reading the statement of the National Maritime Council on behalf of our Executive Secretary, Secretary Lucas D. Bersamin who is the chairman of the National Maritime Council.

But before I do that, ladies and gentlemen, our friends from the media, allow me to say that we are indeed privileged and honored to have amongst us the principal authors of these two significant laws from the both house of Congress, Senator Tolentino and Congressman Arenas.

So, on behalf of our Executive Secretary, allow me now to read the statement of the National Maritime Council. It is entitled "*Signing of the Maritime Zones and Archipelagic Sea Lanes Laws*":

The government of the Republic of the Philippines celebrates a proud and significant achievement in its commitment to protect our maritime interests and strengthen our territorial integrity with the signing today, this morning actually, of the Maritime Zones and Archipelagic Sea Lanes Laws by our President, President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr.

These two laws represent a whole-of-government initiative that highlights our unwavering determination to safeguard the Philippines. They provide essential guidelines for navigation and the sustainable management of our waters, promoting maritime safety, security and responsible stewardship of our precious marine ecosystems. Republic Act 12064 or otherwise known as The Maritime Zones Law aligns and updates various existing laws that define the Philippine maritime entitlements and provides for a complete set of maritime zones in accordance with UNCLOS. It delineates the boundaries of our internal waters, archipelagic waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf. This clarity is vital in establishing the scope of the Philippine maritime jurisdiction, ensuring that our rights and responsibilities as an archipelagic state are clearly defined.

Similarly, RA 12065, otherwise known as Archipelagic Sea Lanes Law plays a crucial role by identifying specific sea lanes within our archipelagic waters where foreign vessels and aircraft are permitted to pass. This allows the Philippines to balance its obligation to facilitate international navigation with its right to manage and protect its waters and national security. Moreover, it empowers the government to enhance maritime traffic oversight, strengthen law enforcement capabilities and protect our rich marine biodiversity. In doing so, it enforces the Philippines' role as a responsible member of the international community dedicated to advancing our maritime sectors and conserving our natural heritage.

With the signing and enactment of the Maritime Zones and Archipelagic Sea Lanes Laws, President Marcos Jr., along with our champions in the House of Representatives and the Senate, we reaffirm their commitment to defending our sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction within the Philippine maritime domain.

As we move forward, we encourage all stakeholders including government agencies, the civil society and the private sector to collaborate in effectively implementing this legislation.

The Maritime Zones and Archipelagic Sea Lanes Laws represent more than just new legislation. They uphold and affirm our national sovereignty and a pledge to our maritime future.

Together, we can strengthen our maritime security, promote economic growth and protect our marine biodiversity for generations to come.

Ladies and gentlemen, that's the statement of the National Maritime Council. Thank you very much. Good morning.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Undersecretary Lopez. And now, we open the floor to questions, okay. Tristan Nodalo, News Watch.

TRISTAN NODALO/NEWS WATCH: Hello. Good morning. Could you take us through about the feasibility of implementation of this law given that there are existing threats for example in the

West Philippine Sea from China, from Chinese vessels. So, how do we plan to enforce it? The Maritime Zones Act for example to make sure that we can implement it effectively?

NMC USEC. LOPEZ: May I answer that? Actually, that's the mandate of the National Maritime Council. The council will provide for a coherent, cohesive approach in any maritime concerns, even the implementation of these two laws. So, moving forward, the NMC will be working on this. Thank you very much.

SEN. TOLENTINO: If I may add. The 2016 arbitral ruling was criticized, we were criticized because it could not be implemented.

The passage of the Maritime Zones Law is an implementation of the 2016 arbitral ruling. It is an implementation. So, in-implement natin dito iyong 2016 arbitral ruling.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you. Next question, Mikhail Flores, Reuters.

MIKHAIL FLORES/REUTERS: Good morning. We're curious if these twin laws can address the Chinese harassments/China's harassment or activities particularly in our EEZ because I think they have already pronounced that they will just ignore domestic laws that will be passed in the Philippines? And are there penal provisions and will we be able to arrest intruders that are encroaching into our EEZ and our territorial seas?

SEN. TOLENTINO: Siguro iyong sa ASL muna. ASL few months ago and this can be validated by the gentleman here seated, we have had sightings of several foreign vessels near Sta. Cruz Island in Zamboanga Peninsula; another one near Lubang; another one near Guian in the Samar, Leyte area.

So, with the passage of Republic Act 12065, the vessels entering our archipelagic jurisdiction/archipelagic waters would just be limited to the three lanes mentioned in the said law – Balintang Channel; the Sibutu; the Celebes. Hindi na sila puwede sa iba.

So, implementation will be done by the Philippine Coast Guard. And the International Maritime Organization would be, upon its approval of this Republic Act 12065, would be issuing notices to all vessels, seamen around the world that there are only three sea lanes to exercise commercial passage within Philippine archipelagic waters. And they can be penalized by the IMO; they can be banned by the IMO. So, it's an international organization based in London who will also help us in implementing the said law.

What will be the sanctions, siguro look at the IMO regulations kung anu-ano iyong mga sanctions kapag hindi sumunod doon sa three sea lanes. And the same is true with aircrafts. Iyong sea lanes sa ibabaw noon doon lang dadaan iyong eroplano, doon lang dadaan si Singapore Airlines, si ANA doon dadaan, doon si United. They can be sanctioned by the ICAO – International Civil Aeronautics Organization based in Montreal.

So, what about the Maritime Zones Law? It's now the job of NAMRIA to determine the exact metes and bounds – ito na iyong titulo natin saan iyong territorial sea, saan iyong contiguous zone. Instantly iyong tensions sa exclusive economic zone will be diluted. Mayroon pa rin iyon because the other side, China, is not recognizing this, will not recognize this. Pero, the recognition, the imprimatur that we will be getting from the international community would strengthen our position. Ito na iyong titulo natin eh, 'di ba. Siguro, sila na iyong sasagot. Si Congressman Rachel.

REP. ARENAS: We also have the reciprocity provision – this is in the maritime zone, it is a deterrent for exploitation and there's a proportional response if there is an international breach. We have that, Mr. Chair, 'no?

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Follow up?

MIKHAIL FLORES/REUTERS: Just a very quick follow up. We're curious if these laws will empower the Philippines to enforce Philippine laws beyond the 12-nautical mile territorial sea because the flashpoints are in the EEZ. And if so, will we be able to arrest ships, poachers?

SEN. TOLENTINO: Yes.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Eden Santos, Net 25

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Sir, para lang po malinaw sa ating mga kababayan, papaano po makatutulong itong dalawang batas na ito para mas mapatatag pa iyong ating claim doon sa mga isla sa WPS? Are we expecting na iri-recognize ito ng China? Kung hindi po kilalanin ng China ito, ano po iyong ating next move?

SEN. TOLENTINO: Siguro, pasagutin ko na itong DOJ mas ano ito. Iyong sa atin, we don't expect an instant recognition on the part of China because they have been disregarding international law.

So, makakatulong sa atin ito kasi iyong mga mangingisda natin; number two, iyong Republic Act 12065, alam na nila kung saan dadaan iyong malalaking mga barko – hindi na mauulit iyong nangyayari dati sa Zambales, Sta. Cruz area sa Zambales na iyong mga bangka nating maliliit nababangga ng malalaking barko – nakaiwas na sila doon kasi iyong malalaking barko doon na lang dadaan sa archipelagic sea lanes 'di ba, so nakabawas na tayo ng sakuna; iyong implementation doon ay Philippine Coast Guard.

Doon naman sa Maritime Zones Law, alam natin, alam ng buong mundo kung saan talaga iyong hangganan natin – so, mas klaro ngayon. Tapos, iyong nilalaman ng arbitral ruling pinasok lahat natin dito sa Republic Act 12064. Siguro, dagdagan ito ni Atty. Fretti ng Department of Justice. Ma'am?

DOJ-SSC ATTY. GANCHOON: Thank you, Sen. I am just here actually to support the law of course, the two laws and to answer any legal questions if hindi pa nasagot ng main panel natin. But the question of Eden is with respect to, what if another state does not recognize our law. As a state, you have a right to enact your own laws and these laws of yours would be effective, even though other states will not recognize your law.

So, the effectivity of your law does not depend on the recognition of other states. So now that we have this law, Republic Act 12064 otherwise known as the Philippine Maritime Zones Act, this act declares the complete set of our maritime zones namely the internal waters, the archipelagic waters, the territorial sea, the contiguous zones, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf, and the law specifically delineates the boundaries or the extent of these maritime zones. So, this would help our law enforcement agencies in the enforcement of our pertinent maritime laws in our maritime zones. So, this would give clarity to the enforcement of our laws especially in the West Philippine Sea of course.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Iyon nga po ang nagiging problema hindi ho ba, kapag hindi niri-recognize ng China, iyon ang nagiging dahilan kung bakit nagkakaroon ng paulit-ulit na harassment ng ating mga sasakyang pandagat, pag-ano sa mga mangingisda po natin, sa ating mga sundalo na nandoon sa bahaging iyon ng West Philippine Sea?

DOJ-SSC ATTY. GANCHOON: Yeah, those things, we can continue to enforce. I think the main objective of this law is to align our existing laws because we do have existing laws on maritime zones, but these are outdated laws, these are old laws that were issued before the 1983 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. And also, we don't have a complete set of maritime zones. So, the primary objective, I think, of this law is to make sure that all of our existing laws related to maritime zones are updated and are consistent with UNCLOS and this will also guide all our agencies when they perform their functions in the West Philippines Sea.

Kasi at present, there is a lot of confusion with respect to our existing laws; this would put to rest all of those confusion.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Attorney, also in addition to that, what the President said in his speech today was for the local governments to align and to update their existing by-laws and laws. Okay, we have a question from NHK, Noriyuki Mizuno.

NORIYUKI/NHK: I just have a simple question like how—do you have any visuals like how these laws has come to change the map of the Philippine seas?

NMRIA ADMINISTRATOR TIANGCO: Yeah, actually, we already prepared the delineation of maritime zones and archipelagic sea lanes. We are just awaiting and anticipating the issuance of the IRR, the Implementing Rules and Regulations, for us to fine tune the same and to finally publish the map.

NORIYUKI/NHK: Just one more simple question. Why it is [only] now to set up this bill in the Philippines?

SEN. TOLENTINO: It's been debated for the last 18 years. We just waited for this interview coming from your side.

BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Attorney, magandang umaga po. Si Atty. Ganchoon. Attorney, ibig bang sabihin nito, mababawas-bawasan na iyong diplomatic protest natin, implementation na kaagad ng kung ano iyong itinatakda ng batas?

DOJ-SSC ATTY. GANCHOON: I don't think that it's the effect, because why do you file diplomatic protest? You file diplomatic protest if there is a violation of your sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdictional right. So, if other states do not agree with—that we have rights there, they would continue to violate our sovereign rights, for example in the West Philippine Sea. So, our purpose there is not to, you know, fight with other states, that is not our purpose here with the issuance or the enactment of the Maritime Zones Law. The purpose really is to provide clarity to our existing laws because our existing laws, some of their provisions are inconsistent with UNCLOS.

If you take a look at our existing laws before the Philippine Maritime Zones Act, they are fragmented, they are not integrated, they are outdated and some of their provisions are inconsistent with UNCLOS. Isn't it that we make sure that all of our actions are consistent with UNCLOS? But there are some laws that are existing in our legal system that are not consistent

with UNCLOS. But with this Philippine Maritime Zones Act, all of our laws relating to maritime zones are consistent with UNCLOS. So, that is the purpose of this law. But diplomatic protest, you know, if somebody is violating your right, then of course the diplomatic protest can continue.

DFA USEC. ALFEREZ: Just to add to what Atty. Ganchoon said about the diplomatic protest. I think what's important is for all us to see and look at these two laws as a sovereign act of the Philippines and primarily this really meant to reinforce our domestic legal framework first and foremost. And certainly, if illegal actions and unlawful presence continue in our maritime zones, anywhere in our maritime zones, I think, it is incumbent upon our government to issue diplomatic protest against that conduct these illegal actions and unlawful presence. So, we should separate those diplomatic actions from the enforcement of our laws. Through these two laws, certainly these provides very clear legal clarity to where our sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction.

And if, you know, these illegal actions and unlawful actions continue, then certainly, we will continue to issue diplomatic protest and other diplomatic actions.

MONTE/NHK: Good morning, series of questions po. When will the law take effect and when will the government deposit the instruments and would it need like, to deposit first these instruments before they become effective? Does this also cover the archipelagic sea lanes law, covers the government owned vessels, because previously there were reports of these Chinese Research Vessels entering our territorial seas or our jurisdiction. And in Pag-asa, whenever people go there, there's this Welcome to China, parang somewhat saying na territory siya ng China. And Senator Tolentino mentioned earlier na kapag pumasok ka, there will be someone saying welcome to the Philippine territory. So, would that change? And lastly, would this help or fast track on exploration of the South China Sea, kasi it's been pending for so long?

SEN. TOLENTINO: You have seven questions. Liwanagin ko lang, siguro iyong iba rin sasagot. Kapag nagpasa ba tayo ng isang batas na halimbawa sa Revised Penal Code, bawal ang pumatay, will it stop murder or homicide, 'di ba? Kapag nagpasa ba tayo ng batas na bawal mag-commit ng cybercrime, will it stop?

Number two, siguro iyong patungkol sa—sa dami ng tanong mo, nawala na ako. Effectivity, within 15 days. But let's treat the ASL differently. It will have to be approved. This is the only law that I have encountered that would have to be approved by another authority and that is the International Maritime Organization. So, nakikinig siguro ngayon si Ambassador Teddy Boy Locsin. So, immediately after the effectivity of this, I am now referring to 12065, we have to submit that to the IMO. Tututukan iyon, six months, mayroong six months period for the IMO to decide whether approved or not. Nagtagal noon kasi may kaso noon/dati, the archipelagic sea lanes law of Indonesia. It took them two years to be approved, before it was approved by the IMO.

Ito ngayon, ginamot na natin iyong posibleng pagkakamali – north, south, east, west – so, lamang-lamang ma-approve ito ng IMO. Once approved na ng IMO, ito na iyong notices to all vessel owners, et cetera, et cetera. So malaking tulong sa atin iyon.

Maritime Zones Law, 15 days upon approval, we can send that to the Secretariat of UNCLOS, as well as the United Nations General Assembly for its imprimatur. No more approval needed, ino-notify lang natin sila.

As to—ano iyong pangatlong tanong? Sa dami...

MONTE/NHK: Pag-asa. The Welcome to China?

SEN. TOLENTINO: That is part of their propaganda. We can also do that. That is why I have been saying since four years ago na dapat iyong ating radio stations, abot doon iyong broadcast, ang tugtog Philippine songs 'di ba? Natatandaan ninyo iyong sinabi ko noon, pati pagbo-broadcast ng PAGASA abot doon. So, implementation na iyon, we can also do that.

Number five question?

MONTE/NHK: Exploration.

SEN. TOLENTINO: Exploration, because of that Supreme Court decision, siguro si Department of Justice. Ibahin natin iyong ano ha, iyong kanina may research ships, ibahin natin iyong laying of underground cables, allowed iyon kahit sino. Exploration, it has to have the consent of the Philippine government sa exclusive economic zone. Puwede mo bang dagdagan iyan, Attorney?

DOJ-SSC ATTY. GANCHOON: With respect to exploration, we do have that right, exclusive right to explore and exploit our natural resources in the continental shelf, as well as of course in the waters of exclusive economic zone. But when to do that and how to do that is already a policy question.

So legally, it's clear in the law, that do we have sovereign rights, exclusive rights in our exclusive economic zone and continental shelf. Because, basically, we just lifted the provision of the UNCLOS and made it into domestic law. So, it says there in our Philippine Maritime Zone Act that we do have exclusive sovereign rights with respect to the exploration and exploitation of our natural resources in the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf.

How to do that? When to do that? That's already a policy question.

MONTE/NHK: Ma'am, with regard to SC 72 which has been pending there for a long time, would that would have an effect, this law?

DOJ-SSC ATTY. GANCHOON: What kind of effect?

MONTE/NHK: Makaka-fast track ba? Kasi hindi pa, I think nag-start again iyong exploration, because the issue with China?

DOJ-SSC ATTY. GANCHOON: Yes, the resumption of course, is a policy decision, we do have the right to explore. But whether you were resume or not, it's a policy question, right? Because you need to take into consideration several factors, not just the law.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, I think, all your questions have been covered. Let's—let me just be fair and get GMA 7, Darlene Cay.

DARLENE CAY/GMA 7: Can these new laws prevent a newly elected President for example to suddenly, for example, change the foreign policy when it comes to the West Philippine Sea?

SEN. TOLENTINO: A policy is different from a law. So, perhaps you're referring to whether a new President would, or an incoming President, would pursue a bilateral approach in approaching this problem or a multi-lateral approach, that's part of the diplomatic arsenal of the chief executive. But the law will be there, because our law now, as I've said, has been reiterated, has been

anchored on UNCLOS. And UNCLOS, if you look at the Constitution, it's a treaty which is signed, form's part our domestic laws.

And then, we have the arbitral ruling. I don't think any president would change course. But in terms of approach relative to the diplomacy, iba-iba iyon siguro. But the law would remain stable and firm to serve as anchor for whoever is the President.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, Harley Valbuena.

DARLENE CAY/GMA 7: Sorry, sorry. Last follow up lang po. I would like to reiterate lang po. So how would these laws prevent iyong ramming and dangerous maneuvers of the Chinese vessels in the West Philippine Sea?

SEN. TOLENTINO: Again, I gave you an example kanina, iyong Revise Penal Code, would it prevent homicide 'di ba? So, the law is there, enforcement, we do that. The law is there to serve as a deterrence, the law is there to provide punishment for wrongdoers, and these twin laws would really fortify our sovereignty as an independent republic.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, Harley Valbuena, DZME.

SEN. TOLENTINO: Sila naman, sila naman.

HARLEY VALBUENA/DZME: Hi, good morning. Do we have the enough or sufficient security resources or manpower or force to be able to implement these two laws?

NMC USEC. LOPEZ: I would like to answer that, having been with the Armed Forces before and [unclear] part of the mandate of National Maritime Council, I said a while ago, a coherent/cohesive approach. Presently, our assets, we can actually implement that, but of course we need to come up with more, so that—you can see naman kung gaano kalawak iyong binabantayan nating karagatan. While it is true there only three passages, but then again, we need more assets, we need more bottoms, we need more technical capabilities to fully monitor, detect and—I don't want say neutralize baka—but addresses any violation of our laws.

For now, we do have enough but there is more promise rin and may be these laws will be source of more development capabilities on the part of our maritime reinforcement agencies.

HARLEY VALBUENA/DZME: So, sir, are we expecting our sharp increase in the allocation of the budget for these assets?

NMC USEC. LOPEZ: We're still having budget deliberations. But definitely, to implement this would need resources, would need capital investment, we look forward to having more lighthouses, strengthen the capabilities of our Philippine Coast Guard, plus for 2025 we're, I'm speaking in behalf of my committee, we're strengthening the Philippine National Police Maritime Command, PNP Maritime Command. So you will now be hearing news, not just about the Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine Navy but the PNP Maritime Command.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Also, yesterday we announced the 40 vessels that will be acquired by the PCG. Let's have Ken.

DOJ-SSC ATTY. GANCHOON: Can I just add? With this law, it would be easier for Congress to allocate resources. It would also be easier for agencies to acquire assets. But let me—I just

wanted to add earlier that, our maritime laws are UNCLOS-compliant. China's maritime laws are not UNCLOS-compliant. We should pass laws not just based on one country, but to protect our national interest and security.

Also, while only one country doesn't acknowledge our rules-based order, the rest of the world acknowledges the rules-based international law.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Ken Sasaki, Kyodo news.

KEN SASAKI/KYODO NEWS: Senator Tolentino told us that these acts had been debated for 18 years, I wonder, why it has not been realized for long and is it because of the diplomatic consternation? And is it realized because of the strong determination of the current president?

SEN. FRANCIS TOLENTINO: You're correct, Ken Sasakisan, 18 years, 18 years ago, and we have to admit and acknowledge and admire the determination of President BBM in having these laws passed and signed. So, it was made part of the priority measures of this administration and as what Congresswoman Arenas has been saying, it has been mentioned in several international fora, even by the President, the last time was in Singapore and in all—DFA should correct me if I'm wrong, in all international consultations with other countries. So, we have to admire the President for signing this.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you. Okay, let's go back to Tristan Nodalo of NewsWatch.

TRISTAN NODALO/NEWSWATCH: Just a follow up. Although, you've mentioned that the purpose of these laws is for clarity for the government policy. But of course, there are also talks of pursuing another international case against China in the international courts. So, will repeat violation of this laws solidify our case with China? And then, second would be, how do we plan together, apart from IMO, international support on these maritime laws like our allies the U.S., Japan, et cetera?

SEN. TOLENTINO: Siguro let me cite you one concrete example. Years ago, when a Chinese vessel caught loitering near the vicinity of Tawi-Tawi was monitored, the explanation given by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affair was that, you don't even have a maritime zone law or even archipelagic sea-lane law, how can you prevent us from stopping near the Tawi-Tawi, Sulu Strait? So, it goes to show that beneath the resistance, they still acknowledge not just not the need but the presence of a law that would/should have prevented in the first place from "loitering". Loitering, iyong tumitigil. Iyong ASL natin, ibig sabihin dire-diretso ka lang dadaan. Thank you, pagod/kaapoy na kami.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Last question, Pia Gutierrez, ABS-CBN.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ ABS-CBN: Hi sir. Sir, will the designation of our archipelagic sea lanes affect in any way that global sea trade by limiting now iyong mga areas where they be could pass?

DFA ASEC. ALFEREZ: I think I'll answer that question. Senator Tolentino already referred to the process within the UNCLOS that requires archipelagic states that declare archipelagic sea lanes to conduct a consultation process with the IMO.

So, the designation of a sea lanes through this Archipelagic Sea Lanes Law is a parallel process that we are undergoing to undertake and are currently undertaking with the IMO. So it's one thing

that we enacted this law, but we're also doing a parallel process with the IMO wherein we are consulting with user-states about the viability of the designate sea lanes that we put into the law.

We are quite confident that we will be able to address any question that user-states will have with regard to the designated sea lanes. UNCLOS is quite clear about the kind of sea lanes that should be designated, they should be the ones that have been traditionally used for navigation, and so the choice of the three sea lanes was carefully studied as Senator Tolentino have said several years.

So, the inter-agency group chose these sea lanes because precisely we have been traditionally used for navigation. So, I think we will get the required support from our partners and other user-states.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: How long do you think the consultations take?

DFA ASEC. ALFEREZ: There has only been one other country that submitted, archipelagic sea lanes for the approval of the IMO and that was Indonesia and Senator Tolentino had mentioned earlier that it took them two years for the consultation process to proceed.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Before we end, maybe perhaps, we can hear from Assistant Secretary Alferez, of the Department of Foreign Affairs on the significance of this.

DFA ASEC. ALFEREZ: Well, just to reiterate that these two laws are very important for our legal domestic framework in terms of our maritime security and economic development. It really clarifies the limits of our entitlements as where we can apply our sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction. And certainly, it's a reaffirmation of UNCLOS and the 2016 arbitral award. And the two laws clearly show what is true for the Philippines as, you now, stated in UNCLOS and 2016 arbitral award, I think that's all I want to add to that.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, and also Undersecretary Tiangco, since this is all about territory, you are from NAMRIA, we'd like to hear from you as well.

NAMRIA USEC. TIANGCO: Thank you very much, as the technical arm of this team, NAMRIA is always committed to providing the technical requirements in undertaking such as this and in this particular case, the delineation and delimitation of our maritime zones and archipelagic sea lanes, of course, in coordination and in cooperation with all partner agencies. Thank you very much

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, and in closing Senator Tolentino, any final words?

SEN. TOLENTINO: I'm just so happy.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, well, that's perfect. Thank you so much Senator Tolentino, Undersecretary Lopez, Undersecretary Tiangco, Attorney Ganchoon, Assistant Secretary Alferez and Congresswoman Arenas. Thank you so much and congratulations. Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas and thank you, Malacañang Press Corp.

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