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REF: DIR. ROBERTZON F. RAMIREZ**

**STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
AT THE JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE**

[Delivered at the President's Hall, Malacañan Palace in Manila | 11 February 2025]

Prime Minister Hun Manet, Members of the Cambodian delegation, Colleagues in the Philippine government, Our friends in the media, Ladies and gentlemen, Good afternoon.

The visit of His Excellency The Prime Minister reflects another important milestone in our long-standing ties with Cambodia. We are glad to welcome to Manila our friends from the government and the business community [of] Cambodia to the Philippines, who, together with their Filipino counterparts, are eager to further elevate the growing cooperation between our countries across diverse areas of mutual interest.

The Philippines and Cambodia established diplomatic ties in 1957. And since then, the friendship between our two nations and peoples has grown both in terms of our bilateral cooperation and in the context within ASEAN. Indeed, written in our history are the interactions between Filipinos and Cambodians in decades past.

Today, in the spirit of this steadfast friendship, Prime Minister Hun Manet and I have discussed ways to maximize our cooperation and explore new opportunities to deepen our bilateral ties. We have exchanged views on ASEAN matters and other regional issues.

We also discussed comprehensively our determined efforts to combat transnational crimes and protect our communities from unscrupulous individuals who take advantage of the industrious nature and strong sense of family of our peoples.

To this end, I have personally expressed my gratitude to His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni for the Royal Pardon granted to 13 Filipino surrogates who were sentenced in Cambodia, but who have since returned to the Philippines last December. We thank the Cambodian government for ensuring their safety and their well-being.

We are also pleased with the growing partnership between our militaries and uniformed services.

I anticipate the continued exchange of best practices and knowledge to support our mutual aspiration for regional peace and security and our collaborative efforts in enhancing our resiliency.

On trade and investment, we welcome our formal cooperation on the avoidance of double taxation and the exchange of best practices in competition law that the Philippines and

Cambodia both consider as critical to entice and facilitate greater bilateral investments and economic activities between our business sectors.

I also note that our two sides have signified their intention to exchange information on strategies and practices in investment promotion and in attracting investments.

I express my heartfelt congratulations to the Prime Minister for the resounding success of yesterday's business forum. The event facilitated fruitful networking opportunities between our private sectors, provided a platform to discuss potential business collaborations, and enhanced mutual understanding of our respective business environments and incentive schemes.

I am confident that through this engagement, we will see more Filipinos investing in Cambodia, and more Cambodians investing in the Philippines.

To our friends from Cambodia, I wish to reiterate that the Philippines is open for business and we welcome the opportunity to partner and achieve greater commercial successes with you.

We also see Cambodia as an important partner in ensuring food security. I am pleased that we have come to an agreement to pursue stronger collaboration in agriculture and in agribusiness. Accordingly, I expressed my hope for both Filipinos and Cambodians in the agricultural sector to actively participate in various programs under this agreement.

On people-to-people ties, we have entered into formal cooperation on technical vocational education and training (TVET). I note that our two sides have agreed on the *Implementation Program for Tourism* as well for the period 2024-2028.

These two instruments will lead to more vibrant exchanges between Filipinos and Cambodians learning together, using their skills to advance our industries and our economies, as well as experiencing the hospitality, warmth, and natural wonders of our respective countries.

We have renewed our agreement on the prevention of looting and trafficking of cultural properties, which reaffirms our commitment to safeguard our highly-regarded cultural items, to facilitate expert exchanges, and to promote collaboration that can enable future generations to appreciate the remarkable representation of our history and our identity.

We also welcome our formal collaboration in ICT and government digital transformation. This enables us to undertake mutually-beneficial initiatives, such as sharing of technical expertise, common promotion of ICT projects, and organizing capacity-building engagements.

Yet even with all our recent successes, there remains much work to be done. We are in the process of bolstering our cooperation in customs, higher education, and culture, among many other fields of endeavor. I am confident we will soon advance our bilateral cooperation in these important areas as well.

So as we look forward to celebrating the 70th anniversary of our diplomatic relations in 2027, Prime Minister Hun Manet and I have agreed to continue working together in a manner befitting

our nations' friendship and reflective of our vision for the improved peace, prosperity, and well-being of all our peoples in the region.

Thank you very much. *[applause]*

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