

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK

REF: DIR. ROBERTZON F. RAMIREZ

**STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE BILATERAL MEETING
WITH PALAUAN PRESIDENT H.E. SURANGEL S. WHIPPS JR.**

[Delivered at the State Dining Room, Malacañan Palace in Manila | 24 February 2025]

[inaudible] ...on a famous win in the last election.

We are presently in the middle of our own midterm elections. So, being – having gone through many of these processes, I fully understand that no election is easy. No matter how well you are doing and how well everybody says you are doing, none of them are easy. So, congratulations.

Our formal diplomatic relations may be young. Having been established only in 1997. But our two neighboring nations have had heritage and history in common.

With our unifying quest for independence, self-determination that predated all our diplomatic ties. From these historicals of the Malolos Congress, which is the first Congress of -- the first organized Congress of the first organized government of the Philippines, to the Philippines' staunch support for Palau's own independence in 1978.

Our long history of mutual support has remained a cornerstone of our bilateral relationship to this day.

With Filipinos making up a significant percentage – I understand it's now 25 percent. We are a good Catholic country. You know, we believe in multiplying. *[laughter]* Their contributions to Palau's economy and society highlight the benefits of our long-standing people-to-people ties.

So, in this regard, the Philippines looks forward to discussing concrete steps to advance our negotiations on bilateral labor agreements and the social security agreement with the hope that both agreements will be concluded within the year.

I launched last year the Philippine Pacific Initiative to establish focused cooperation with the Pacific in the areas of health, food security, labor mobility, and disaster risk resilience mitigation and management. A step towards a greater collaboration with our Pacific kin.

With bilateral health agreements on the horizon with various Pacific island countries including, of course, Palau, we are positive that they will yield more exchanges between our healthcare workers and ultimately greater health resilience in our region.

As we now meet in Manila, our hope is to further expand our engagements in practical and impactful ways from agriculture and fisheries to development and technical cooperation.

As climate vulnerable developing archipelagic Pacific nations confronting the challenges of natural disasters and sea level rise, our two countries understand the urgency of effective

disaster risk management and collective climate action. We hope to further advance our mutual support in various fora in these critical areas.

On this note, may I now invite President Whipps to give his remarks.

--- END ---