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

[Delivered at the President's Hall, Malacañan Palace in Manila | 24 February 2025]

*His Excellency
President Surangel Whipps, Jr.,
Members of the Palauan delegation,
My colleagues in the Philippine government,
Our friends in the media,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning.*

I am pleased to have with us *His Excellency President Surangel Whipps, Jr.* in Manila for us to take stock of our two countries' shared history of cooperation and solidarity, [and] the many opportunities before us to further strengthen our close bond as two Pacific neighbors and friends.

Anchored on our common maritime identity, our dynamic people-to-people ties, and our mutual commitment to safeguard the environment, we engaged in a candid and productive dialogue on concrete ways to realize the potential of our partnership, and how we can present a united front in facing the challenges unique to our Pacific context.

Our ties with Palau predate our formal diplomatic relations, which were established in 1997. Ours is a friendship borne out of the common struggle for independence and for freedom. It is rooted in the strong historical ties and cultural affinity between Filipinos and Palauans that remain to this day.

In this spirit, we exchanged views on global issues, especially those that have outsized importance in the Pacific. I reaffirmed the Philippines' commitment to working closely with Pacific nations in charting the future of the Pacific and our unyielding support to efforts to advance the resilience of our Pacific kin, which [is] at the heart of the *Philippine Pacific Initiative* that we launched last year.

On maritime cooperation, we committed to continue our dialogue on maritime boundary delimitation. We have also discussed the framework of our fisheries cooperation to improve our fishing and aquaculture sectors through the sharing of best practices and technologies, capacity-building initiatives as well, development of fisheries infrastructure, [and] cooperation for international market compliance.

This agreement also signals our common desire to ensure sustainability in our life-giving waters. We thereby commit as well to work for joint fisheries conservation and to combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing practices.

Filipinos and Palauans share the same diligence and hardworking spirit, and we see this in the dedication of 4,000 Filipinos that are now making a living in Palau.

With them in mind, I look forward to the conclusion of our labor cooperation agreement that aims to protect and to promote the welfare of Filipino workers in Palau, as well as the early conclusion of a *Social Security Agreement* that will guarantee Filipinos who work in Palau access to social benefits.

We have discussed formal cooperation in health, in promoting human resources development, and amongst others that we have discussed a wide range of issues. I look forward to the immediate conclusion of our negotiations on the different critical areas of cooperation.

We have made concrete plans for collaboration on Technical Vocational [Education] and Training (TVET) and other forms of technical cooperation, including, as we have seen today, study visits from Palau on agriculture and health, two important pillars of our bilateral relationship. We also recognized the importance of tourism and air connectivity in bringing us closer as neighbors.

Our growing trade relations are an undeniable indicator of meaningful opportunities in Philippines-Palau economic relations.

I extended to our honored guests from Palau, the Philippines' readiness to support Palau's renewable energy and construction sectors with Philippine companies offering cost-effective and quality materials.

On the multilateral front, I reiterated the Philippines' commitment to be a trusted partner, an innovative pathfinder, and a dedicated peacebuilder. I look forward to advancing initiatives with Palau that will help achieve a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive future for our region.

As our two countries look forward to celebrating the 30th anniversary of our diplomatic relations in 2027, President Whipps and I have agreed to continue consultations and engagements between our two governments in the spirit of our long-standing friendship and Pacific kinship, [and] in pursuit of our common vision of peace, prosperity, and progress for the peoples of our region.

Thank you very much. *[applause]*

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