

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK
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**INTERVENTION OF
PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
ASEAN LEADERS' INTERFACE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ASEAN BUSINESS
ADVISORY COUNCIL (ASEAN-BAC)**

[26 May 2025]

Excellencies,

Distinguished Members of the ASEAN-BAC, Ladies and Gentlemen,
The Philippines thanks ASEAN-BAC Malaysia for your leadership and for setting forward-looking priorities for 2025. Your work continues to align with ASEAN's collective efforts to deepen regional integration and ensure that ASEAN remains competitive and connected.

We see ASEAN-BAC not only as an advisory body, but as a vital partner in shaping ASEAN's economic future. As we work towards the ASEAN 2045 Vision, the Philippines stands ready to collaborate in turning this vision into action by building a region that is resilient, inclusive, and digitally empowered.

We especially commend two of your flagship initiatives.

First, the ASEAN Talent Development and Mobility Initiative. Preparing our people for the future of work is essential. By prioritizing digital literacy, student mobility, and upskilling, this initiative will help strengthen our region's human capital. The Philippines welcomes deeper collaboration to identify priority sectors and provide effective policy support.

Second, the AI Engagement Platform offers a timely and strategic approach to digital governance across our region. By fostering collaboration on responsible and inclusive AI, it ensures that technological advancements benefit all segments of society. We fully support this initiative and recognize its potential for a future ASEAN Centre of Excellence for AI, built on innovation, ethical standards, and transparency. Such Centre can lead in shaping an AI ecosystem that empowers our people, safeguards our values, and contributes to sustainable development throughout our region.

We also acknowledge your assessment of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) implementation. To become a global trade and investment hub, ASEAN must keep goods and services flowing smoothly. While regulations are certainly necessary,

we must ensure that they do not become trade barriers. At the same time, ASEAN can begin looking into strategic trade management to equally ensure secure trade in our region.

In advancing the Digital Economy Framework Agreement, the private sector's role is essential. Investments in digital infrastructure, innovation, and human capital will be key to building a digital ASEAN.

Above all, we must continue to invest in our people. A digitally literate, adaptable workforce is the foundation for any progress we hope to achieve.

We also thank the ASEAN-BAC for championing MSMEs, which power over 99% of our all our businesses in the region. The Unique Business Identification Number (UBIN) Implementation Roadmap is a welcome step in helping these enterprises grow across borders.

Lastly, even as trade tensions and policy uncertainties remain, the private sector can find assurance in ASEAN's quiet resolve to uphold stability and deepen economic cooperation. By ensuring that trade remains both open and secure, we aim to foster a more trusted and resilient economic environment within the region and beyond.

In closing, the Philippines remains committed to working together with ASEAN-BAC to build a future-ready ASEAN that is united in purpose, bold in vision, and inclusive in progress.

Thank you.

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