

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

PHILIPPINE MEDIA INTERVIEW

WITH

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.

[Held at the Malacañan Palace, City of Manila | 23 January 2023]

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.: Okay, before we left kasi for Switzerland, there were many requests for interviews which we weren't able to accommodate simply because we were so busy preparing for Switzerland. So I thought we have one once we got back. So here we are. There's a lot to talk about so I think you can open the floor.

Q&A:

KAREN DAVILA (ABS-CBN NEWS): Good afternoon, Mr. President. I'm Karen and thank you so much for doing this. So I'll be asking you two questions but you have to forgive me that the first question will be — will have a lot of context in it for agriculture. Our losses are driving farmers to desperation. Some farmers already taking their own lives. In Davos you said you would only step down as Agri Secretary if you've ticked off items in your bucket list. My question is what is in that list and what will you specifically do to implement for farmers to feel a change in their lives today – in the short and medium term?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: As a matter of fact, I'm glad you've brought that up because we always have been talking about production, production, non-importation, et cetera. And we have to always remind ourselves that you know what we are really talking about is the livelihood of the farmers as well not only the supplier of food but of the – the pricing of food but also the livelihood of farmers and the future of farmers.

I mean I think it's a much quoted – a much quoted statistic that in the Philippines, the average farmers 57, 58 years old; and the young people are not that interested to enter into farming. So there are all of these multifaceted problems that are being – that we face in terms of agriculture.

So again in the short term, the increasing prices of food products is alarming. And that's why we have to be – now have to – whatever we do, we cannot – we must import. I think my sentiments about importation are clear. But it is an emergency situation that has been brought about by neglect of the agricultural sector for many, many years. And therefore, our production is well below our demand. Therefore, we must import.

So because of the chaos that we saw with question – when it came to sugar, when it came to the onions, we did not know how much – how much of the commodity was actually in the country. We are starting to get a hand on all it now.

And so we are going to put in terms of sugar, I mentioned specifically before that we will now from now on maintain a two-month buffer stock that is to mitigate the – the speculation. Alam mo normal ‘yan eh sa negosyante eh. ‘Pag alam nilang magkaka-shortage, eh they will keep it hanggang tumaas ‘yung presyo. Maybe you can call that hoarding but it’s a business practice and that’s what we hope to avoid.

In terms of onions naman, ganoon pa rin ang sitwasyon. We are not producing as much as we consume. And therefore, we still have to import. But the schedule of importation – both of sugar and onion, all of the other commodities – the schedule is very, very important. It’s not just a question of one lump importation at the beginning of the year. It has to come in at the proper time so you are not competing with local farmers. So that’s a very simple first step. ‘Pag maayos na ‘yan, that is one box that I’ve been – I will say I’ve been able to tick.

Now the so – *[Ms. Davila: The bucket list.]* but we come back to the problem of production. So that again we still have to put into place. Once I know that the value chain has already been put together – never mind that it is functioning yet, but we already know what needs to be done – what needs to be done in each part of that value chain and we have the means and we have a plan – then, we will have a secretary who will then take my place and will implement that plan. Basta’t alam nating nakakaintindi doon sa ating ginagawa.

So those are the essential elements that I’m talking about. There is some reorganization that needs to be done in the Department of Agriculture for the simple reason that we are doing different things from what they were doing – what we were doing before. And so you have to restructure the bureaucracy in like fashion.

MS. DAVILA: I wanted to ask you said you have a bucket list that needs to be ticked off. Would you share some?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, that’s it.

MS. DAVILA: That’s it.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: That’s basically it. I mean you know within those – within that subject matter hindi lang ‘yan. I mean if you go into detail, there are very – still very many things that we can do – we need to do. In terms of production, we have to help the farmers. We have to enter – we are trying to adopt new techniques for the – for farming that will actually – that we will be able to use: new technology, new variety, start with the R&D.

You know especially in the area of agriculture, the overarching issue is climate change. We have a real – we are having a very tough time doing – scheduling these things because the weather keeps changing. And one of the reasons I've also made contact with several other countries and my counterparts in several countries is that we are trying to develop what we refer to as non-traditional suppliers. And because of the price of fertilizer; the lack of export of wheat; rice, of course is another thing that we import; corn, we are going to have to import.

But with the shocks that have hit the global economy and with the supply chain problems that we see everywhere, then that is the – that is the – that is something that we have to work around. And the way to do it is to have many sources of supplies so that whatever happens we have somewhere to go.

Hopefully down the road, in a few years, we no longer have to worry about non-traditional supply because we will be able to produce enough for ourselves.

MS. DAVILA: Mr. President, about the Maharlika Wealth Fund. Congressman Joey Salceda talked about a reengineered fund and I wanted to ask you he said, he described it as the securitization of P44 billion and it will be listed in the stock market. You have lawmakers, opposition lawmakers, who say that under the law 50 percent of the income of GOCCs have to be remitted to the national treasury and you use it for the budget. So along with that, how could you ensure that the fund won't be used for money laundering given you will be accepting private funding?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: That's two in one there.

MS. DAVILA: Yes.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: We'll do the first one first. First of all, the idea of using the GOCC is to put value into the Maharlika Fund was broached in Davos and it was brought up. I don't know why it's made this news here immediately to the Philippines and people are very concerned about it.

I watched your interview with Congressman Edcel Lagman this morning.

MS. DAVILA: Thank you. Yeah.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: And I've heard the comments that Congressman Joey Salceda has made and his concerns that he had aired. I agree with them. You cannot use funds of the GOCC, *pera ng gobyerno 'yun*. What will the government spend? It was a proposal. It's not something that we have adopted. The GOCC is...

There are several problems because I remember one – we had a little meeting, it lasted about 15 minutes – and that was proposed. But after the meeting, I pulled Secretary Ben Diokno aside and I said, "*What do you think?*" Sabi niya, "*Hindi yata puwede.*" And I said, "*It's too disruptive.*"

Think, every single GOCC has its own charter. How will you – ? You will then revise all of those charters to align with the Maharlika Fund. That's not the purpose of the GOCC, number one. Number two, this is a lot of income that goes to the national government that will suddenly disappear. So that will be... No sorry, not disappear, it will go into the Maharlika Fund and cannot be used for the budget of the national government. And we have many things that we would like to – that we would like to appropriate in the coming years and we will need those funds.

So I don't think that that's a viable proposition, at least not for us. I've seen – I know that there are other sovereign wealth funds that did it that way. But it's – parang hindi bagay sa atin 'yun eh. Kaya't we are a little lukewarm about that idea.

The worry about the fund being used as a money laundering device implies that private monies will be put into the fund. But yes private monies will be involved with the fund but it's not a savings account that you just put it there and it stays there.

No. What will happen is the Maharlika Fund will serve as the seed fund for the sovereign wealth fund. And sorry the 40 billion, 30 billion, 40 billion whatever it may come to at that point is going to serve as the seed money for the fund.

Now, whenever we come into partnership, we do a G2G with Japan, for example, or we do a PPP with some big outfit, then that is only the time that the monies come into the fund to be used for the program. Hindi 'yun basta't, "O sige, bigyan niyo ako ng ilang bilyong dolyar tapos ilalagay lang 'yan basta akong bahala na diyan." It's not like that at all.

And in fact, even on our end, we will only deploy funds when there is a very specific project to be paid for. So money laundering just won't come into it.

CHERYL COSIM (TV-5): Good afternoon, Mr. President. I'm Cheryl Cosim representing TV-5 and sama ko na rin po 'yung OnePH and One News. So ibig sabihin ba nun six questions puwede? *[laughter]*

Okay, my first question concerns the positions in your administration. First, just a little over a month ago, you granted former PMS chief Naida Angping's leave after she asked for personal time for herself and her family. What made you appoint her as Ambassador to France considering she never held any diplomatic post before this, and who will replace her?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, the situation with then Secretary Naida Angping was that it was a personal decision in her part. She had some personal issues that she had to work through and she said I cannot do my work while I'm having to go through this. And that's why I need to go and think about it.

And she came back and she said maybe I can just find something that will not – that I will be able to handle. And I said, “*What do you think?*” And she said, “*If you could appoint me to a diplomatic position?*”

She has not held formally a diplomatic position but she has been working with the foreign service for years, and years, and years. Tao ‘yan ng Uncle Kokoy ko. And she worked in the American embassy, the Philippine embassy in the United States. She worked in – she worked in well, China. She worked in all of the areas that we were slowly opening up. So sanay siya sa trabahong ‘yan.

And she has said that she has – and she has already – she had for years now been working on her foreign service classifica – ah exam. So I think that’s what she is going to plan to do now. Iyon talaga ang gusto niyang gawin since before. So now we will formalize her wishes. So but again the reasons for her are personal so I don’t think it’s my place to talk about that. It is her choice.

MS. COSIM: Okay, like what I’ve said “positions” in your administration. Isa pa lang, sir. Pero ito na pahabol doon sa first, okay, about Erwin Tulfo. It was reported that you’re gonna appoint him as one of your presidential advisers. If so, on what?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No, that’s not been – that’s really not been part of the plan for Erwin. No, we have other plans for him. Not as a presidential adviser.

MS. COSIM: But he would still be part of your administration?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I hope so. I hope so. Because whatever we say – difficulties that he faced with the Committee on Appointments, in the CA, he – the time that he was running the DSWD he did a very good job. So we can’t lose that kind of – that kind of asset. So we’ll find something that he can do so we could take advantage of his good instincts when it comes to social service.

MS. COSIM: Mr. President, still position, another position in your administration, may mga comments po ang mga senador na mag-appoint na po kayo ng secretary po sa DA and other groups para daw po mas matutukan ang ahensiya. Your comment on that?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: For me sa DA, there really are things that I can do that if there was a secretary and he or she did it, hindi – magagawa pero matagal, madaming diskusyon, and they’ll have to come up... The President they cannot say no to. And ‘pag hindi nila ginawa ‘yung utos ko, puwede kong sitahin.

Iyong secretary they can – alam mo na and you know it can still be may pakiusap pa. So that’s what I bring to the position is that when I make a decision, I say this is what we need to do, this is the plan, everyone of you follow this plan, you do this, you will do that, magta-tasking tayo, kailangan masunod ‘yun. And if not, then I have – I can

chastise them, I can move them aside, push them into other positions, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

But generally speaking, if the President asked you to do something, they'll do it. If there's somebody else to do it, they may do it – they probably do it but they may not. So we want to take that wiggle room out of their – out of that system.

MS. COSIM: And this is my second question, Mr. President. Just a few weeks after your visit to China, Chinese Coast Guard drove away Filipino fishing boats in Ayungin Shoal. What message does this give you? And what happened to President Xi Jinping's promise for a compromise?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, we haven't come to that compromise yet. And the timing of what we call – we refer to as a shadowing, it's what they do is they shadow our fishing boats. So that incident happened right after I had returned from China.

So we have immediately used that thing, that mechanism that I talked about na sinabi we can even immediately contact the Chinese government and hopefully our counterparts on the other side can bring it to President Xi's attention, this problem, and we have done that.

But that does not preclude us from continuing to make protest and continuing to send note verbales concerning this. But you know this is a long process because it is something new. I just hope we can come to some kind of arrangement because I cannot see the utility for the Chinese of doing that. These fishing boats are not armed. They don't pose a threat to anyone. So I think that is something that we can achieve in the near – in the near term.

MS. COSIM: Thank you, Mr. President.

NELSON LUBAO (NET 25): Magandang hapon po.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good afternoon.

MR. LUBAO: Nice to meet you in person po. Ang akin pong katanungan ay marahil ay katanungan din ng mga simpleng mamamayan tungkol sa inyong foreign travels. Ang una po ay 'yung binanggit niyo na ang Pilipinas ay naging bahagi na nung tinatawag na "VIP Club", best performing economies in Asia. Papaano po natin ire-reconcile 'yan doon sa iniisip naman ng karaniwang tao na pagpunta niya sa palengke mahal ang sibuyas, mahal ang iba't iba pang presyo ng bilihin tapos tayo ay best performing economy, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Dahil iyong inflation ang pinag-uusapan. Isang aspeto lang 'yan sa ekonomiya. Kaya't 'yun talaga – totoong problema 'yan dahil... Bumababa na

nang kaunti dahil maglalabas na tayo – naglabas na – nagpapasok na tayo ng sibuyas, nagpapasok na tayo ng asukal. So kahit papaano the supply will feed the demand at bababa ang presyo. Kaya't 'yun ang para sa akin ay the reason na tinitingnan ang Pilipinas na maganda ang performance dahil sa ibang bagay.

Kasi maghanap ka ng bansa na 7.1 percent ang growth rate, na bumaba ng 4.2 percent ang unemployment rate na mas mababa ngayon kaysa sa bago ng pandemya. Ibig sabihin nakapag-create tayo ng halos 2 million jobs mula noong 2020 hanggang ngayon. At pati 'yung peso medyo tumibay na. Kaya't palagay ko hindi lang ang inflation kasi lahat naman ng ibang bansa ganyan din ang inflation eh.

Kaya't kung titingnan ninyo ay sasabihin ito 'yung mga ibang bagay kaya't matibay. Kaya't nabuo, gumawa... Kasi wala namang VIP noon eh. Nangyari lang 'yan dahil nagpe-present tayo doon sa Davos at marami tayong ipinakita, marami tayong paliwanag, marami tayong diskusyon sa kanila. Sabi nila kasama na kayo doon sa grupong 'yun, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Philippines. So sa Asya, iyon ang tatlo na uunahin nilang tingnan as investment destinations.

MR. LUBAO: Pero ito pong performance natin sa ekonomiya ay siguro in the following months or days mararamdaman din ng karaniwang mamamayan?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Oo, siyempre hindi naman kasi basta't magpasok ako ng ilang tonelada ng sibuyas, bukas bababa na 'yung presyo. It has to go – dadaan pa sa sistema 'yan. It takes a little while pero hindi naman ganoon katagal.

This year talaga 'yun ang, 'yun ang... Iyan ang problema kong hindi – na hindi nagpapatulog sa akin eh, 'yung inflation eh. That's what I lose sleep every night over is how to bring down inflation. So I'm determined to make – to bring down – to make sure that the inflation starts to come down in the first quarter and mag-normalize na pagkatapos nun.

MR. LUBAO: Okay, second question ko po, foreign travels din. Ang puna naman ng iba bakit ba ang Pangulo ay travel nang travel ang dami namang problema sa bansa? Ano ba ang sa tingin po ninyo, Mahal na Pangulo, 'yung travel ninyo na talagang mayroong immediate effect sa mga Pilipino?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Ay hindi, proseso 'yan.

MR. LUBAO: Matagal.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Proseso 'yan. Hindi 'yan 'yung pupunta ka, tapos kakausapin mo 'yung ano korporasyon, nagustuhan ka, "Ito, itong malaking pera sige sa'yo na." Hindi ganoon. Magpapakilala muna tayo dahil hindi tayo... Pagka hindi tayo bumiyahe

at nagpakita diyan sa mga conference na 'yan, hindi tayo iniisip. Wala sa isip nila ang Pilipinas.

Iniisip lang nila o dito tayo sa Vietnam, diyan tayo sa Indonesia, o doon tayo sa China, doon tayo kung saan-saan. Hindi Pilipinas ang iniisip. Kailangan natin ipakita ano ang ating ginagawa para naman mapaganda ang potential na investment nila na dadalhin nila dito sa Pilipinas. Iyon ang aking – iyon ang halaga ng mga biyaheng 'yan.

At hindi lang 'yun at mayroon din dahil, halimbawa sa Davos, ay ang subject matter laging pinag-uusapan ay how do we cooperate in a fragmented world dahil nagkaka-fragmentation na raw ang buong mundo dahil sa mga pangyayari sa pandemya, sa Ukraine, lahat 'yun. Papaano ngayon natin ibalik ang kooperasyon? Dahil naman sang-ayon naman lahat sa pag-iisip na ang kooperasyon sa bawat bansa ay mahalaga at hindi kakayanin ng kahit sinong gaano kayaman na bansa na nag-iisa. Kailangan may mga partner 'yan, kailangan may kaalyado 'yan.

Kaya't 'yun naman ay pagpunta natin sa mga ganyang conference ay masasabi natin the Philippines can play this part in that – in fostering or in encouraging that cooperation. May lugar tayo. We are participating in the issues and the discussion and in our efforts in the community of nations. Kasi kailangan din — kailangan kasama tayo diyan.

Pangatlo, I'm the new kid on the block. Nobody knows who I am. Kailangan kong magpakilala. Kasi 'pag sabi o bago ito. Sino ba 'to? May alam ba ito? Tama ba 'yung ginagawa? O ano bang klaseng tao 'yan? Iyon, iyon ang mga... That's important also na magkaroon ng personal, halimbawa personal sa mga lider na kaya ko ngayon – hindi ko kayang gawin 'yun dati. Ngayon kaya kong buhatin ang telepono tumawag diyan sa lahat, tatanggapin naman ang tawag ko at mayroon na kaming mapapag-usapan, and that's very, very important.

Kasi 'yun na nga like in President Xi's case, siguro ay never pa tayo nagkaroon ng contact at that level. Ngayon dito ngayon sa mga ASEAN, sa mga APEC, nakilala ko na silang lahat ay mas kahit papaano mayroon ka ng koneksyon doon sa mga taong 'yan. So that's important, that's very important lalo na ito nga 'yung kagaya ng sinasabi sa Davos "in this fragmented world".

MR. LUBAO: Salamat po.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thank you.

JUN SORIAO (UNTV): Good afternoon, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good afternoon.

MR. SORIAO: Nice to meet you po. In relation po doon sa tanong ni Kuya Nelson, sinabi niyo po noong Sabado sa Davos nga po na “the Philippines is leading the economic recovery and performance not only in the Asia Pacific but in the whole world.” Umani po ito ng maraming reaksyon o iba't ibang reaksyon ‘di ho ba. Saan po nakuha po ‘yung datos para patunayan po ‘yung pahayag na ‘yun?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Ayan ‘yung nabanggit ko. Napakasimple pagka binabati tayo, anong laging sinasabi sa akin pagka may mga nakakausap ako? ‘Pag ‘yung IMF — kino-congratulate tayo, “*Congratulations on your 7.1 growth rate.*” Si Widodo ganoon rin, “*Congratulations on your 7.1 growth rate.*” It’s the growth rate kasi ‘yun talagang... Lahat ng bansa nangutang nang husto nito noong pandemya. Tapos noong dumating ang Ukraine, palaki nang palaki na ang utang. Kasama ang Pilipinas doon.

Hindi kasing lala ang sitwasyon natin sa mga ibang bansa na karatig-bansa natin. Ngunit mataas pa rin ang debt-to-GDP ratio kung tawagin. Kaya’t ang hihila lang – ang tutulong talaga sa atin na pagandahin ang debt-to-GDP ratio is growth. Iyon lang talaga kaya’t ‘yun ang tinitingnan ng lahat. Dahil noong nagkapandemya noong 2020 hanggang 2022, kadulu-duluhan ng 2022, ay talaga ang nangyari namatay ang economic activity.

Kaya’t ‘yung mabilis magpabuhay ulit ng economic activity makakalamang. Eh tayo mabilis ang growth rate natin kaya’t nakikita, sinasabi na ito talaga ang... Kaya nga nagkaroon nga nung VIP nasama tayo doon. Kung hindi ako napunta sa Davos, eh “VI” lang ‘yan. Ngayon “VIP” na.

MR. SORIAO: Second question, in relation pa rin po doon sa tanong ni Kuya Nelson. Kakambal na po ng pangangako ng investment ng iba’t ibang — sa pagpunta ng mga dati ng presidente, nakaraang presidente ng bansa ‘yung pangako nga po ng investment ano po. Iyong iba po pangako lang, ‘yung iba talaga talagang hindi talaga natupad po katulad na lamang po nung investment na ipinangako ng China noong nakaraang administrasyon. Sa inyo po, paano niyo po masasabi na matagumpay ‘yung mga ipinangako sa inyo ng iba’t ibang mga lider ng bansa ‘pag patungkol po sa investment?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Eh nasa sa atin ‘yun. Nasa sa atin ‘yun. Kaya’t ‘yung mga biyahe eh nabanggit mo na rin ay ‘yung mga biyahe medyo babawasan na namin for the rest of the year.

Ang dahilan ay kailangan namin balikan lahat ng itong mga nasimulan sa ASEAN, sa APEC, sa China, pati ‘yung pagpunta sa EU, sa Brussels, tapos itong biyahe dito sa

Davos ay kailangan namin idetalye 'yung aming pinag-usapan. Sino ba dito – tungkol dito sino bang kinausap natin? Ano bang naging usapan natin? O dito sa lahat ng project na sinasabi, ano ba i-prioritize natin diyan? Kailangan na naming gawin 'yun. Hindi pa namin nagagawa dahil busy kami, biyahe kami nga nang biyahe. Pero at least mayroon kaming naiuwi. Ngayon kailangan na natin i-consolidate, kailangan na natin i-follow up, kukulitin na natin 'yung mga kausap natin, "O 'yung pinag-usapan natin ituloy na natin ang usapan." Nasa sa atin talaga 'yun.

Kung pababayaang natin 'yan, marami na tayong nakita na pumirma ng katakot-takot na MOU wala namang nangyari. Kaya 'yung MOU para sa akin o maganda 'yan, okay 'yan. Pero simula pa lang 'yan. Hindi pa 'yan project. Simula pa lang 'yan. Simula pa ng usapan para magkaroon ng project kaya marami pang gagawin. Kaya't 'yung sinasabi ko kanina proseso ito. Hindi ito 'yung basta't biglang mangyayari na iyon na nga may isang biyahe, uuwi ka ang dami mong dalang – ang dami mong dalang investment. Hindi ganoon. Kailangan dahan-dahan, titingnan, pag-uusapan.

And it's also to put ano — itong mga biyaheng ganito ay kung pagmamasdan ninyo 'yung mga meeting namin, 'yung tinatawag naming roundtable meetings sa mga negosyante, 'pag magkukuwento kami sasabihin ang Pilipinas ganito ang ginagawa namin, binago namin 'yung ano, mayroon kaming CREATE Law, maganda na mag-PPP, et cetera, et cetera.

Okay lahat 'yan ay pinag-uusapan. Pero ang ending lagi sa palagay ninyo ano pa ang kailangan naming gawin para mag-invest kayo doon sa amin? So it's interactive. Hindi lang kami nagsasalita doon, nagle-lecture doon. Nakikinig din kami sa kanila. Doon sa inyo ano na bang nangyayari? May potential ba diyan o walang mangyayari diyan? Huwag kayong titingin diyan dito mayroon may ano... Ganoon, ganoon ang ano – ganoon ang interaction doon para mabigyan din tayo ng bagong kaalaman tungkol sa takbo ng ekonomiya.

Halimbawa, kausap mo 'yung katabi ko sa Davos, si ano Moynihan, the head of the Bank of America, tinatanong ko anong outlook ng Bank of America sa mundo? Ano 'yung tingin ninyo? Ano areas ang magiging masigla? Ano 'yung medyo maiiwanan? So marami kang natutunan.

Anong plano ng Bank of America? Saan kayo magi-invest? That's the only way kung hindi... At nangyari 'yun nakausap ko ang head ng WTO, ang head ng IMF, ang head ng World Bank tungkol nga diyan. Ina-analyze ko ano ba talaga ang nangyayari — ano sa palagay ninyo ang mangyayari? Saan tayo puwedeng umasa? Saan 'yung medyo mahina ang pagbago. So it's a whole process but... They learned about us but we certainly also learned about them. That's also very important.

MR. SORIAO: Thank you very much po.

MELA LESMORAS (PTV-4): Hi. Good afternoon, Mr. President. I'm Mela from PTV-4. Sir, follow-up lang po doon sa nabanggit niyo na 'yun nga magbabawas na kayo rin ng biyahe this year. Pero saan-saan po kaya 'yung mga kumpirmado niyo ng pupuntahan at gaano ito kahalaga para sa ating bansa, 'yung mga biyaheng ito?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: The one – the only one na confirmed sa ngayon APEC, November, sa States. Pero November pa 'yun. Hindi... Kasi ang Philippine, dapat naman talaga ang Philippine president kailangan pumunta sa lahat ng APEC eh. Importante talaga.

Marami talagang napapag-usapan. Kahit 'yung kung minsan five minutes lang, mag-uusap kayo, pero mula doon mayroon na. Nagbigay na kayo ng number, puwede mo nang tawagan, puwede mo na i-follow up. At kung minsan ang nangyayari diyan, kaya't kumpleto ang delegasyon namin dahil sinasabi ko kung ano pang mangyari kailangan handa tayo. Nandiyan 'yung secretary na dapat magtrabaho. Nandiyan 'yung staff niya para gawin na 'yung papeles, hindi na mag-aantay na pag-uwi ng Pilipinas, nandiyan na lahat, kailangan kumpleto.

Kasi itong mga biyaheng ito, dalawang araw 'yan eh, dalawang araw. Mahaba na 'yung tatlong araw. Ang dami mong gagawin doon sa tatlong araw na 'yun kaya't kailangan kumpleto na kumpleto ka. And that's why that we have tried to be very ready for that.

The APEC, again, is one of those that I really have to – a Philippine president should really attend because it is the relationship essentially between ASEAN, the Philippines, and the rest of the world. And that's very – those are very, very important relationships. So sa ngayon 'yun pa lang ang na-confirm, November APEC.

MS. LESMORAS: Opo.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Sa San Francisco ata.

MS. LESMORAS: Opo and sir kasi, for my second question, about naman sa Maharlika Investment Fund ulit. Ngayon kasi, nagbalik sesyon na ang Kongreso, ano po 'yung mensahe niyo sa Senado kasi nasa kanila na ngayon 'yung bola patungkol dito sa MIF at kailan niyo po ba target itong maisabatas mismo?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Ang message ko sa Senado, suriin ninyo nang mabuti para magandang-maganda 'yung batas natin. Suriin ninyo nang mabuti. Siyempre, mas maganda na matapos sa lalong madaling panahon. Pero hindi naman dapat imadali dahil napakaimportante lahat ng mga ilala – bawat salita na ilalagay mo doon sa batas na 'yun may kabuluhan 'yun. Hindi mo basta't puwedeng ano, "O tama na 'yan, okay na." Kailangan talagang pag-aralan nang mabuti 'yun.

Eh malaki naman ang tiwala ko sa mga senador. Alam naman nila 'yung kanilang trabaho. Pag-aaralan talaga nila nang mabuti 'yan. Eh that's the process, tama 'yun. Tama 'yun.

But in terms of schedule, nag-release ng statement si Senate President na baka by Holy Week matapos na. Maganda 'yun. That would be good. But, ako sa akin, mas importante na maging tama kaysa maging mabilis. So kailangan gawin nating tama. Kahit na – lahat naman masyadong matagal eh. Pero basta't makuha – we have to get it right. We cannot make that – getting it wrong would be a very poor – would be a very bad mistake.

MS. LESMORAS: Okay. Maraming salamat po, sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thank you.

RICO HIZON (CNN PHILIPPINES): Hello, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Hi, Rico.

MR. HIZON: Rico Hizon, CNN Philippines. Tinanong na yata lahat ng mga tanong na gusto kong tanungin eh, ng aking mga fellow anchors. *[laughter]*

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I'm sure may maiisip ka.

MR. HIZON: Mr. President, I have been an OFW for 25 years – Hong Kong, London, and Singapore. And having worked with two global news organizations, I've been exposed to the best practices of various governments in the region and around the world.

Good governance, transparency and accountability. The Filipino people really want to know, from your eight overseas trips in the last seven months, how much have you spent per trip? Indonesia, Singapore, when you went to Europe, to China, and here in Davos, and the number of people in your official and unofficial entourage list. Para lang klaro po sa ating mamamayang Pilipino.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, I don't have the figures. I'm sure the figures are somewhere but...

MR. HIZON: Pero will it eventually be revealed, Mr. President, for the Filipino people?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Once we've calculated everything. Because this last trip of course, we just finished before – during the weekend. We came back on Saturday. So

in terms of the cost, you know, the way I see it, you have to look at it as ROI. Do we bring something back or do we not?

If you say, I don't know, as I said I don't know the exact figures of the cost and everything. But for example, we came back from China with pledges of 22 billion. Let's say we get actual out of that one billion, bawing-bawi lahat ng eight trips. Finished. That's the idea.

And we did not only go to China. We went to Davos, we went to the EU, we went to ASEAN, we went to APEC. So in each of those, many pledges were signed. And as I said, it is up to us. Now, the measure of success will be, you know, cost-benefit, very simple. How much effort did you put into it? It's not just the money. It's the time that you put into it. It's the time and the effort that goes into it is really... That's what I was trying to explain earlier. The reason that we have everyone on the delegation.

Actually the official delegation is just myself and the Cabinet ministers, then they have staff. So, the rest are security. And the others that have been accompanying me are actually private sector. They don't actually fly with me. They go there on their own. Although they are included in our meetings, and they have their own meetings on the sidelines as well.

So again, the way I approach this is ROI. How much did you spend? How much did you get? And again, as I'm saying, if we get just one of the MOUs, isa lang, napakahina naman natin if isa lang ang makuha natin. Hindi namin ginagawa trabaho namin kung isa lang makukuha natin. But sabihin na lang natin, isa lang ang makuha natin. Bawi na lahat nung trip ko.

MR. HIZON: Pero Mr. President, sinasabi rin ng mga kritiko that no matter how the government tries to invite investors to the country but if there's a lack of transparency, accountability, eh the country does not really invite confidence?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I fully agree. So we will have transparency.

MR. HIZON: So ililista ba ninyo 'yung gastos, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: So there will be accountability and transparency in everything that we do. That's axiomatic. Who's going to argue with that? The – that is one...

But this has not been an issue that the private businesses bring up. They bring up ease of doing business. They bring up the cost of energy. They bring up the problems of legislative guarantees. Ang legislative – lalo na sa PPPs, legislative guarantees ibig sabihin na sa gitna nung project nila papalitan 'yung batas, hindi nakikita 'yung project

nila, pero pilit pa rin silang tapusin. ‘Yun, ‘yung mga nangyayari daw... ‘Yan ang nirereklamo nila sa Pilipinas.

So the critics will have their say. But those who are actually contemplating putting good money into the Philippines have other issues and that is not – accountability and transparency is not an issue.

MR. HIZON: Mr. President, you talked about the ease of doing business, you talked about power rates which is one of the highest in Asia.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Not anymore. Not anymore. No, Europe is the same now as us.

MR. HIZON: But what are your plans during your administration to bring this down together with the private sector? Because that is one of the issues that is being raised by many investors around the world.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Oh, yes. Medyo number two na lang ngayon. Dati number one talaga.

MR. HIZON: Kasi hindi lang itong administrasyon na ito...

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No, years, years.

MR. HIZON: Even the past administrations have always been promising.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yeah.

MR. HIZON: Let’s improve the ease of doing business, the bureaucracy.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: The bureaucracy has to be streamlined. The ease of doing business is because we’re talking about trade. So the digitalization is going to be a very important part of that. We have to digitalize Customs. We have to digitalize all of these collecting agencies so that the BIR, even the Central Bank, the payments can be made over the internet. All of those things that we don’t do now.

We have to remove any discretion. If the thing is lahat ng – kahit wala kang kausap na tao, nagagawa mo 'yung kailangan mong gawin. Makuha mo 'yung lisensya mo, makuha mo 'yung permit mo, makapagbayad ka nung whatever it is, ng fee, whatever it is to get your papers. Whatever it is.

So we came up against a very disturbing finding here in the Philippines. The ordinary Filipinos who have connectivity talk to every aspect of their lives through the internet, to the school of their children, to their business, to their friends. And the only entity that they do not talk to over the internet is the government because the government is not digitalized. So let's digitalize the government and we will – that will take us a long way to helping in the ease of doing business.

Now, the problem of energy is a very major one – it is a very major one because at the bottom of it is simple. The supply of power is – the demand for power far exceeds the supply that we are producing. And there is also a problem in distribution which is why the prices are so high. That has to be fixed also.

But in the long term, as we fix what we can at home, in the long term, and that is one of the things that we talked about a great deal on these trips is bringing new power plants into the Philippines. And of course, we are stressing on renewables because we're trying to improve the mix of power generation between traditional and renewables.

But that's a long term. Anything I start, anything this government starts, we will not see the end. Ang nuclear power plant six years, seven years eh. Ang floating wind turbines, six years, seven years ganoon din. Anything is six years, seven years. But we have to start. So that's what we're planning to do. We will start.

MR. HIZON: Isang tanong na lang baka kasi hindi na ako makakatanong eh. Mr. President, ang ating utang 13.6 trillion pesos. Ang taas-taas. And our debt-to-service ratio is more than 60 percent. Paano natin po ibababa ito?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: That's why that's growth. We will pull ourselves out of debt via growth. That really is the guiding principle to the economic plan.

MR. HIZON: And the investments and the pledges that you will be focusing on?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, yes, make them real so that that growth continues to pull us out and then provide new jobs. Now, we have to – we are very proud that we are at 4.2 percent unemployment rate which is like, you know, you cannot have a recession if your unemployment rate is that low.

So but despite that, we still have to make the jobs more higher quality. We have to make them better. So these green jobs which what we're talking about, and even the new technologies that are going to be used for our OFWs. All of these things, the upskilling, the reskilling, that's all we talk about. That's all – because those are the things that we need to do.

It's not one simple thing. There is no silver bullet. We have to do very many things to make it right because what we are in fact doing is restructuring the entire Philippine economy to adjust to the new world global economy.

MR. HIZON: Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thanks, Rico.

SASS ROGANDO SASOT (SMNI): Good afternoon, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good afternoon.

MS. SASOT: I'm Sass, SMNI News Channel. My first question is related to privatization. Earlier this month, Department of Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista revealed that you have plans to privatize the operations of NAIA and as well know, privatizing government assets has been a very contentious issue in our country. For example, the predecessor of your father, former president Corazon Aquino you know has been lambasted for privatizing a lot of government assets.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: We have no plans of privatizing...

MS. SASOT: Okay.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: There's no plan to privatize anything. Rather, we do the opposite. No, when Secretary Jimmy Bautista was talking about that, I think he may have been – maybe he misspoke or he was misinterpreted. But you cannot privatize an airport to begin with. They cannot own the airport. A private firm cannot own the airport.

At best, kasi na nga nagkakagulo, nagkakaproblema tayo dito sa airport... At again in New York, mayroon kaming nakilala, the group that runs Gatwick Airport, they run London airport, they run several big airports, that we are talk – asking them what can they do, can they come in and help us so that we can increase the traffic through the Manila airport. And they said, they could. And so they are coming – they were here last week and to look at the operations of the airport and especially since we had that problem on New Year's day and this recent outage with the UPS.

So at most, we will have a management contract. Come in and manage the airport. And they say that they, without changing anything, without changing – without new equipment, without building a new runway that they can increase the traffic from what is

presently, they refer to as 35 movements per hour to up to 45 movements per hour without changing anything.

So we want that. And those skills can only be had from this group... Well, no, there are several groups but they can be had from the private sector group who have huge experience in running ports and running airports.

MS. SASOT: Mr. President, my second question is about foreign policy. You have been very clear and emphatic since the start of your administration that you are going to continue the foreign policy doctrine of your predecessor, the friend to all enemy to none foreign policy doctrine of non-alignment. My question is related to how further you're going to possibly refine or operationalize this doctrine? Does your administration see any opportunity in – for example, deepening engagement with the non-aligned movement, especially now that superpower rivalry, especially now in our zone is, you know, might be intensifying sometime in the future?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: That was very much in response to the Cold War and the slow – the slow dismantling of the organs of the Cold War, if that's how you want to put it. And that is why that non-aligned treaty was created between several nations who said that we no longer subscribe to the notion that we as a country must choose one – to side with one superpower or another.

And that is precisely what we have undertaken and that is exactly the position that I have taken in terms of foreign policy. Although you know, it came up, this came up again in our discussions in the conference. The question that was asked was very – actually thought-provoking. Will geopolitics finally kill globalization? Because geopolitics is pulling people apart and all these aggrupations are being pulled apart.

And the general conclusion is that the people – that countries realized that alliances are important, are in fact they are more than important, they are necessary. Nonetheless, these alliances do not mean that we are again within the sphere of influence of any great power.

As a matter of fact, in ASEAN we all came to the agreement that at the very least, in ASEAN, in the Asia-Pacific region, the future of the region must be decided by those in the region, not by some outside power.

And so I think the idea, I do not know of the formal – I do not know of any formal meetings or conferences of the non-aligned nations, they used to have them. They don't have them very much anymore. I don't know about that but – we are very much in the spirit of that treaty. We are very much part of it in the sense that we continue to walk that very fine line between two great superpowers who are surrounding us both physically and geopolitically.

MS. SASOT: Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thank you, Sass.

IVAN MAYRINA (GMA INTEGRATED NEWS): Mr. President, good afternoon. I'm Ivan Mayrina. I represent GMA Integrated News. Before I proceed to my two questions, I'd like to ask a follow-up question from Cheryl's question earlier about the latest incident in Ayungin Shoal.

Mr. President, how do you intend to resolve the seeming disconnect between what gets agreed upon at your level, at the top level, and what gets implemented out at sea? I know you said there is no compromise yet but in the meantime, our fishermen are being prevented from engaging in their livelihood.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, I think the actions that are needed are really from the Chinese side. And that is because we do not send Coast Guard boats into what we consider their waters or international waters. They stay within Philippine waters.

And so that hopefully, as I said, the reason that it was important for me... Let me clarify what we talked about with President Xi. It was very simple. I said we have to raise the level of discourse between the Philippines and China.

Now, we already have a bilateral group that's working on issues about the South China Sea. Now, my proposal is that we bring that bilateral group to a higher level. It's sub-ministerial level ngayon. Sabi ko, let's bring it to a ministerial level and I will ask my foreign secretary to be part of it. I will ask my ambassador to China to be part of it and I guarantee you that if there is any decision that needs to be made, either of those gentlemen can pick up the telephone and talk to me, and within five minutes we will have a decision.

I hope that China can do the same. And that is what – that is what – President Xi was agreeable. And he said, why not. So he assigned his foreign minister to take care of the details. That's what we're working on now.

Now, with the power structure in the People's Republic, I think that if the President, President Xi puts out an order that we will not do that anymore, we will do something else, then I think it will be – I think the chain of command is fairly solid. Because again, we will have the – we will be able to report any violations of whatever agreement we come to.

MR. MAYRINA: Pangalawa – ah unang tanong ko pa lang. *[laughs]* Kamakailan po naglabas ng video si First Lady Liza tungkol sa – naglabas siya ng warning sa mga taong gumagamit daw ng kanyang pangalan para ma-appoint, apparently it had something to do with the appointments at the AFP. At sinabi niya 'pag ginawa niyo 'yan sasabihin ko sa asawa ko huwag kayong i-appoint. My question, Mr. President, is how

involved is the First Lady in your decisions with regard to appointments and in your governance in general?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Zero. She really has no – she really has no input on that. The First Lady helps me in terms of the organization because she is actually very, very good at that. Organizing which office, how the office – how the workflow goes, where the documents go through. She is well – she is a well-trained lawyer so she is very good at that.

And so... But that's the extent of it. We don't talk about – we don't talk policy together. I mean she'll comment. She generally says that you know that looks good, it doesn't look good. I don't know why you're doing that. What a great idea. But that's it.

MR. MAYRINA: Do you consult her on difficult decisions?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Not political. Not political decisions. Legal. Oh yeah, legal I will ask her. I will ask... I will ask... Whenever there's a legal question, I'm not a lawyer so I need an expert opinion. She's right next to me most of the time so I could turn to her.

I can turn to... I am very lucky – actually I think I have the best legal representation of any president. I have a former chief justice as my executive secretary. I have JPE, who is working as a Legal Adviser to the President. And between all of these experts and legal luminaries, that's when – that's the only time that – the discussion may include Liza. But she's not – she doesn't come to the office and sit with us at all.

If I have something to ask her it's usually definitions. Define to me what is the legal definition of this, what is the legal definition of that. When they talk about this, what do they mean? What's the legal concept behind that? It's usually – that's the kind of question – 'coz she's a teacher. So that's the kind of question I ask her.

MR. MAYRINA: Last question, sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Okay.

MR. MAYRINA: Madalas niyo rin pong isama si Congressman Sandro sa inyong mga biyahe at sa inyong mga engagements. The question is, is the Congressman being groomed as the next Marcos president?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Sandro? No. He is not being... We're not grooming him for anything. He is grooming himself. He is... He has decided on this career in politics and he will handle it the way he does.

There is not some long-range plan that one day Sandro is going to be president. He will laugh – actually he will laugh in your face if you tell him that. But no, there is no...

We don't think... He has work pa in – he has work in Ilocos Norte. Even talks of the president, it would be so, so premature. And it's not something that we plan. I mean we will...

I think he has the same attitude as I do. I'll take this as far – I'll do as well as I can, work as hard as I can, and take this as far as I can, which is exactly what... Wow. Like...

When people talk about it, *“Did you plan this being – to be President?”* Well, you know I was a congressman, sabihin mo, masarap din siguro mag-presidente 'no? Governor ba, all these problems na hinaharap ko maaayos ko sana ito kung presidente na ako. Senador ganoon din.

'Di ba everybody dreams to be at the number one position. But that doesn't mean that we're plotting – we have this long-range plan. Not at all. Not at all. He's too busy anyway. He has too much work anyway.

The reason he accompanies us is because he's an author of the Maharlika bill, the Maharlika Fund bill. And sometimes he has – like I had an interview with Financial Times, he took over when it came to the Maharlika bill because I had somewhere else to go. So siya ang nag-explain. Author naman siya dapat alam niya. So that's one – recent trip that has been... That's the reason why he has been with us.

MR. MAYRINA: Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thank you.

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