

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE  
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**PRESS STATEMENT BY EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT**

**H.E. URSULA VON DER LEYEN**

Thank you very much, President Marcos. Thank you very much for welcoming me here in the Philippines.

Indeed, it is the very first time that a European Union Commission President is visiting the Philippines and this on the eve of the 60th Anniversary of our diplomatic relations. And I was glad to meet you in Brussels at the end of last year for our very successful EU-ASEAN Summit.

Today, I'm here to accelerate a new era of cooperation between us. We share so many values and interests. We both want to work towards strengthening our democracies. We believe in the international rules-based order and we believe in the need to promote and to defend it.

So, it makes sense to strengthen our ties across the board, and we discover, discuss several ways to do so.

First, by taking our relations to the next level.

The European Union is already your fourth largest trading partner and we are the first foreign investor. But we can do so much more. So I'm very glad that we have decided to relaunch negotiations for Free Trade Agreement.

Our teams will get to work right now on setting the right conditions so that we can get back to the negotiations. A Free Trade Agreement has huge potential for both of us in terms of growth and in terms of jobs.

Whether it is on the European continent or here in Southeast Asia, we have all learned the hard way, the cost of economic dependencies. We need to diversify our supply lines and make them resilient.

And this is the lesson we have learned and that is what we call de-risking our trade relations. An FTA is the basis for that but it's also much more. An FTA can be a springboard for a new technology cooperation to modernize the broader economy.

Second element we discussed is the fight against climate change. I welcome your ambition to put the Philippines on the path to a cleaner and greener future. We have the same ambition.

Therefore, we created in the European Union Global Gateway. Global Gateway is the EU's investment plan for the world for sustainable infrastructure. We want to partner with you on this path. Notably with the Team Europe initiative on the green economy that we just signed here. We will provide financing, expertise, and access to technologies to support you in the transition to a circular economy and the generation of green energy.

Team Europe, that is the European Union and the Member States, will contribute almost half a billion euros into this green initiative. The European Union is also supporting your fight against climate change and extreme weather events with its so-called “eyes in the sky.” This is the Copernicus satellite.

We’re currently setting up a so-called Copernicus data mirror site within the Philippine Space Agency. And we have just signed an agreement to boost the flow on Earth observation data between us.

This is very important for early warning, for example, for extreme weather phenomenon and to improve the climate resilience. This is a first in space cooperation in Asia.

My third point is on turning the Philippines into a digital hub in the region. Global Gateway will also play a crucial role here, and European companies are ready to come and invest in the Philippines.

We will launch this year the Digital Economy package for the Philippines. That is we will together on fast and reliable connectivity with submarine cables, on cybersecurity training, and on deployment and development of 5G.

We are also working on a possible extension on a submarine cable that we plan to build between the European via the Arctic to Japan, and this cable could go all the way down to Southeast Asia. And we believe that it could go via the Philippines. That would give you a strategic position on an infrastructure that could be instrumental both for your prosperity and national security. We will stay in close contact on this.

My fourth point is on critical raw materials. We need them for our clean and digital future. Here to the Philippines have a great potential, and we want to work in partnership with you.

So, let us start by identifying project that we would develop your local mining industry, supporting your communities, and that contributes to a secure global supply of critical raw materials.

Our existing partnerships on critical raw materials do not only invest in extraction but across the whole value chain.

We share technology and knowledge, we train the local workforce, and we empower local communities, and of course, we abide by the highest environmental standards.

My final point is on cooperating on security. The global geopolitical landscape is changing, it is volatile, it is more threatening. Authoritarian leaders show that they are willing to act on their threats. Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine shakes the foundation of the international order. It is in violation of the UN Charter and the fundamental principles of international law such as territorial integrity and sovereignty. And this is why Europe supports Ukraine’s brave fight against the aggressor because the illegal use of force cannot be tolerated, not in Ukraine, not in the Indo-Pacific.

Security in Europe and security in the Indo-Pacific is indivisible. Challenges to the rules-based order in our interconnected world affect all of us.

Our societies pay through higher energy bills, through higher food costs. This is why we are concerned about the rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific. The European Union has been very

supportive of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Because an Indo-Pacific free of the threats of coercion is key to all our stability, to our peace, and to the prosperity of our people.

The European Union underlines that the 2016 award of the Arbitral Tribunal on the South China Sea is legally-binding. And that it provides the basis for peaceful resolving disputes between the parties.

We are ready to strengthen the cooperation with the Philippines on maritime security in the region by sharing information, conducting threat assessment, and building the capacity of your National Coast Watch Center and your Coast Guard.

To conclude, we have a broad roadmap to bring our partnership to the next level. Let's use the great momentum we have in our relationship and many thanks for hosting me here. Thank you.  
[applause]

--- END ---