

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
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**REMARKS BY
PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
AT THE MEETING WITH THE FILIPINO COMMUNITY
IN HONOLULU, HAWAII**

[19 November 2023]

Maraming, maraming salamat sa ating Kalihim ng Department of Foreign Affairs sa kanyang pagpakilala, Secretary Ricky Manalo. *[Please take your seats.]*

And let me say what I have waited very long time to say, Aloha! *[Crowd: Aloha!] [cheers and applause]*

Alam niyo po, I'm sure that they have told you we have just come from San Francisco and Los Angeles. Sa San Francisco, we attended the APEC conference. At 'yung mga lahat ng bansa na nakapaligid sa Pacific Ocean and in Asia were there and it was very important for us to be there.

But on the way back, I was told we can fly directly from San Francisco to Manila. And I said, but Honolulu is in – Hawaii is in the way – on the way. *[cheers]* So I said, we have to go down – we have to land in Hawaii. I have to say hello to all our friends in Hawaii *[applause]* because Honolulu, Hawaii holds a very... The Filipinos and the Filipino Americans in Hawaii hold a very special place in my heart *[applause]* for all the wonderful experiences that we had here with our Filipino compatriots.

That's why generally speaking, when I come up to speak, I start by introducing our delegation that are here with me. But since this is a special place and it has hold special memories, I will turn it around a little bit. I want to introduce you to them. These are the people that kept us alive for six years. *[cheers and applause]*

We landed here in Honolulu with nothing, with nothing. My family was flown from Malacañan Palace to Hickam Air Force Base and when we finally move to Makiki Heights. Kayong lahat nakikita ko kayo nandoon kayong lahat, I know – they were always there. We had nothing with us. They kept everything to inspect everything.

These are the people who kept body and soul together of the Marcos

family. *[cheers and applause]* Ultimo... When I tell this story, people do not quite believe me. But I tell them, you do not realize how – how close we became and how kind and how generous the people – the Filipino Americans in Hawaii were. *[applause]*

PSC, PSC, mga PSC, dating PSC. Oh, kita mo. These are your predecessors. Ito `yung mga dating Presidential Security. Ito mga naiwan na dito. Ito `yung mga sumama sa amin. *[applause]* Pati po `yung nag-entertain sa atin si Florante, matagal na siyang nandito. Lagi kaming magkasama ni Florante noong nandito kami.

And as I was saying, when I tell this story, people do not believe it. They do not quite believe it. But we landed here with nothing. Even – ultimo `yung damit namin sila ang nagbigay, sila ang nagpapakain sa amin, pati `yung mga appliance doon sa Makiki sila ang nagdadala. At pagka kami ay nalulungkot, sila ang nagpapasaya sa amin. Kung hindi sa inyo, palagay ko wala na `yung pamilyang Marcos. Kaya't hindi ko makakalimutan. *[cheers and applause]*

In behalf of my entire family, wala na `yung aking ama, but when my mother found out that I was coming to Honolulu, she said you make sure that you go back to all of those people who went out of their way to keep us comfortable, to keep us alive, literally alive. And that is something that I will carry in my heart, that the Marcos family will carry in our heart. We tell our children about this and how wonderful you all were to us in the time that we were here. We could not have survived that very difficult period if not for you.

And that's why when I was in San Francisco, I insisted we must pass by Hawaii because even if I thank you every day for 1,000 years, it is not enough for all of the things that you did for us. *[cheers and applause]*

Naalala ko tuloy `yung mga ano sa Makiki, kung ano `yung mga ginagawa. These are the leaders of the Filipino community. Iyong iba wala na. Si Manong Joe wala na. *[laughs]* Wala na tumanda na tayong lahat, Manong. Naka-wheelchair na. But again, without you – siya ang nauuna, siya talaga.

Ang sabi sa akin when I first arrived here, kausap ko si Uncle Kokoy, your father, and I said, "Bakit nandiyan `yung Jolaso? Sino ba `yan?" sabi niya. Sabi niya, "Nako, kung hindi lang pangalan mo Marcos, mas loyalista pa sa Marcos `yan kaysa sa'yo."

At `yan ang mga tumutulong sa amin. These are the people who have been – who really were – that we as a family, we as individuals, owe a debt of gratitude that we will never ever be able to pay.

But now it's time to go back and introduce to you ang ating mga kasama dito sa delegasyon natin. Kasama po natin ang Speaker ng House of Representatives, Speaker Martin Romualdez. *[applause]* Nandito rin po ang ating Kalihim ng Department of Trade and Industry, Trade and Industry Secretary, Secretary Fred Pascual. *[applause]* Kasama din po natin at dahil mayroon tayong kaunting ugnayan dito sa militar ng US habang kami'y nandito, kaya't nandito po ang NSC Chairman natin, Chairman Ed, where is Ed Año? Is here. *[applause]*

Kasama din natin ang isang kilala ninyo, isang Deputy Speaker ng House of Representatives na tumutulong din sa atin dahil siya'y naging expert sa mga economic issues kaya't napakahalaga na kasama siya dahil iyon ang aming pinag-usapan doon sa APEC. Ang ating Deputy Speaker at Congressman Ralph Recto, *[applause]* who is sometimes referred to as Mr. Vilma Santos. *[laughter]*

Well, we heard from the Philippine Ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Babe Romualdez. Nandito rin ang ating very important new department in Philippine government, especially for the OFWs, for Filipinos who are living and working abroad. Ang ating pinakabagong departamento, ang Department of Migrant Workers at kasama po natin si Undersecretary Patricia Yvonne Caunan. *[applause]* `Yan pagka nagkakaproblema, pagka nagkakaproblema – kaya't gumawa na po tayo ng isang department para lang sa mga OFW dahil sa napakahalaga – the importance that we put to what the contributions are of our countrymen to the Philippines. Because many times we think that the OFWs are only here to work for their families, to help their families. Well, that is true and maybe that is one of the original motivations. But in the process of you helping your families, you also help your communities. And that is why we created the Department of Migrant Workers so that we can be sure na ang lahat ng inyong pangangailangan pagka kayo ay lahat ng maitutulong ng pamahalaang Pilipino ay ating gagawin dahil napakahalaga ang inyong kontribusyon sa ating bansa.

Kasama din natin dito is the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Chief of Staff General Romy Brawner Jr. *[applause]* And ito hindi na kailangan ipakilala dahil kasama ninyo lagi, our Consul General to Hawaii Emil Fernandez. *[applause]* At hindi ko makukumpleto ang aking pagpakilala kung hindi ko naman ipakilala ang aking maybahay, our First Lady, First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos. *[applause]* All fellow workers that are with us, my fellow workers in government; ladies and gentlemen, naimbag nga rabii yu amin, good evening po sa inyong lahat. *[applause]*

So, thank you once again for the very enthusiastic welcome. The First Lady and I, and the esteemed members of my delegation, are delighted

to be back here in Hawaii, in these islands, which many describe as a paradise, after my attendance of the APEC Leaders' Meeting in San Francisco earlier this week. I made sure, as I said, I made sure that we come to Hawaii so that I could spend a little time reminiscing with all our friends here and perhaps go around and look at the places where we used to spend time in the time that we were here.

And many of you as we have all noted, many of you are also from – beforehand started as all from the North, mga Ilokano na... [*cheers*] Nagado ti Ilokano ditoy. And that is why we have made it a point to come.

Also, I wanted to come because we have been watching in the Philippines, pinapanood namin ang mga pangyayari sa Maui. At kawawa naman ang ating mga Pilipino na naging casualty. And so before I proceed, let us share a moment of silence as we remember those who perished in the devastating wildfires in Maui last August.

[Pause for a moment of silence]

We pray for strength and courage for the relatives and friends of those fatalities as well as those who are still recovering and rebuilding their lives in the aftermath of that terrible disaster.

I truly appreciate seeing you all here to celebrate the close connection that the Philippines has with Hawaii. My wife Liza and I bring the fond greetings of our family and the Filipinos back home.

For over a century now, the Filipino presence here has become part and parcel of Hawaiian culture. From the various industries, tourism, health, education, business, and political representation, the Filipino's mark can be seen and felt, and indeed, even tasted. I know that Filipino cuisine is a staple even among non-Filipino friends and family now.

And with 25 percent of the population of the State of Hawaii having roots in the Philippines, our rich and diverse culture has become deeply intertwined in the social fabric of the Aloha State. That is how deep the connection between us has been and will always be.

Over the years, Filipino Americans and Filipinos have contributed such a great deal to Hawaii's economic development. Our connection began when 15 *sakadas* arrived in 1906 as plantation workers. They left Salomague Port in Ilocos Sur, 'yun 'yung una. Kaya't noong 2006, we were able to celebrate the 100th year. At 'yung mga kamag-anak ng mga unang sumakay na immigrant workers, plantation workers dito sa Hawaii

ay nakapag-celebrate kami kasama pa namin ang governor ng Hawaii noon. At dahil sa importansya na ibinibigay ng mga Hawaiiano sa mga Pilipino ay hanggang Pilipinas nagkakampanya na ang mga American na kandidato ay para makuha nila ang boto ng Pilipino.

At 'yan ang aming ginagawa noong nandito kami ni Manong Joe at ino-organize namin ang mga Pilipino para naman mayroon tayong boses sa lahat ng mga nakikinig – lahat ng mga leadership ng Hawaii, ng Honolulu, at ng iba't ibang bayan sa ibang lugar. I remember talking to all of the governors and also the former mayors. If you remember Mufi Hannemann was the mayor for a while and he was always saying that he's basically a Filipino. And that applies to not only the mayor but also all of the leadership na sila lahat naman sila ay pinalaki ng Pilipino. Kaya't malapit sa puso nila ang Pilipinas.

Subsequently, Filipinos fought shoulder to shoulder with American soldiers during the war. We see now many very successful second and third generation Filipinos, as well as present-day migrants, who are an indelible part of our society.

Because of you, the Philippines enjoys a very positive image in Hawaii. Thank you for all that you do for our country. *[applause]* And this is the characteristic that I have found everywhere that I go. And over the many years that Filipinos have been working abroad, and not only in the United States, not only in Hawaii pero kahit saan ako pumunta ay unang-una sinasabi ang gagaling ng Pilipino, ang sisipag, ang babait, mapagkatiwalaan, at ang gagaling pang mag-English. Mas magaling sa amin mag-English. Kaya't naman kinikilala na ang Pilipino dahil sa inyo.

It is because of your hard work, it is because of your talent, it is because of your graciousness, and your affection for those that are around you. Ang laging nababanggit na katangian ng Pilipino ay masyadong matulungin at ipinapaliwanag ko sa kanila na mayroon tayo kasama sa ugali ng Pilipino, sa kultura ng Pilipino 'yung tinatawag na magiging bayanihan. At hanggang sa lahat ng pinupuntahan ng Pilipino ay dala nila 'yan. Dala nila 'yan ang pagkabayanihan ng mga Pilipino at kahit na, sinasabi nga nila, kahit na hindi sa trabaho na ay basta't may nangangailangan, tumutulong pa rin. Kahit hindi Pilipino ang nangangailangan ng tulong, tutulungan ng mga Pinoy.

Kaya't naman mahal na mahal na kayo ng inyong mga kakilala dito, ang inyong mga katrabaho dito. At hindi lamang dito sa Hawaii, kundi sa buong mundo ay kinikilala na ang Pilipino dahil sa maganda ninyong ipinapakita at kami naman sa Pilipinas ay pinapalakpakan namin kayo kahit malayo at

pinapalakpakan namin kayo sa inyong napakagandang ibinigay at dinudulot sa reputasyon ng Pilipinas. *[applause]*

I cannot go further without giving another word of thanks. Alam niyo po noong kampanya, noong last year, noong kami'y nahalal ni Inday Sara ay hindi kami nakapunta rito. Hindi kami makapagbiyahe. Gusto sana namin magkampanya kung saan-saan dahil sa dami ng Pilipino nasa abroad ay dahil – nais sana namin. Ngunit hindi namin magawa dahil may COVID pa noon at hindi masyado – hindi pa lumilipad 'yung mga eroplano kaya't hindi kami makapunta kahit saan. Doon lang kami sa Pilipinas muna.

And yet I am told that I garnered 83% of the votes in Hawaii and in America Samoa during the voting exercise of last year. *[applause]* Kaya't kailangan kong magpasalamat sa inyo, sa inyong tiwala na ibinigay sa amin – sa tiwala at suporta, at pagmamahal na inyong pinaramdam sa amin.

Kahit na hindi kami nakarating dito, ramdam na ramdam namin. Nakikita naman siguro ninyo 'yung mga programa, mga rally natin doon sa Facebook at nila-livestream namin para nga makita ng lahat ng ating mga kababayan. Hindi nga namin magawa kaya't gumawa kami nang kaunting replica noong kampanya para naman kayo na hindi namin napuntahan ay makaramdam kayo nang kaunti ng aming karanasan noong nakaraang halalan.

Even from the time of my father, you have been by our side in our quest to serve the country. From the bottom of my heart, I must say that I thank you for trusting me, for believing in this leadership. In return, I and my administration will be hard at work and have been hard at work from day one, to ensure that we accomplish all that we have set out to do.

In San Francisco, I met with the leaders of other APEC countries, where we discussed how to create a resilient and sustainable future for Filipino Americans and all the people of the APEC regions, by making our economies interconnected, innovative and inclusive. And I urged them to leverage APEC's core values—collaborate with the private sector, align efforts with global economic initiatives – with the view to expand representation, strengthening government business relationships, addressing protectionism, intervening when the market fails while continuing to enhance cooperation on a broader scale.

It is become a very important part of the transformation of the Philippine economy that we are undertaking. And why is it that we have to transform the Philippine economy? Because COVID changed everything. COVID changed the way we work. COVID changed the way we live. COVID changed the way

we interact with one another. COVID changed the way we do business and we have to adjust, accordingly.

And the strength will come from these partnerships that we create with our friends and allies from around the world, starting with APEC, with ASEAN, pati na sa UN. Lahat `yan ay talagang nilalapitan natin para naman pagka mas marami kayo na nagkakapit-bisig, na nagtutulungan, mas matibay, at mas mabilis, at mas magiging matagumpay ang inyong mga ginagawa.

So, the Philippines' participation in this regional organization promotes and helps us achieve our national objectives. So, I am happy to share with you that the Philippine economy remains strong and positive. In 2022, our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew [to] 7.6 percent from 5.7 percent in 2021. And in the first half of 2023, our GDP grew by 5.3 percent. Which if you compare it with many of our Asian neighbors, we are doing better than most of the world. Not only Asia, but we are doing better than most of the world.

And I'm confident we will achieve our target growth of somewhere between 6 to 7 percent, 5 to 6 percent for this year because we have you and your full support with your trade missions, your various business pursuits.

Our economic managers project our GDP to grow by a very good number from 2023 to 2028. Ang aming target po ay mula 2023 hanggang 2028 ay lumaki ang ekonomiya ng Pilipinas, net about by 6.5 to 8.0 percent. We are closely monitoring domestic and external developments to make sure that whatever policy adjustments that are necessary are in fact being made.

Employment and jobs in the Philippines are now at historic highs. Tourism growth areas are back in business. Investment registration activities have significantly increased. Manufacturing activity has accelerated, contributing to the highest share of GDP at 18.7 percent. This is the contribution in 2022. We continue to closely monitor the impact of global economic slowdown and will facilitate diversification of external markets in order to expand opportunities for our exporters.

We will still face many challenges in the economic sphere until next year and in the following years. Hopefully, they will subside but nonetheless, they will still be there. But you must rest assured that we are better equipped now and more resilient now to withstand various external risks and challenges.

With the active participation of all sectors of society including overseas Filipinos, we can be on track in achieving social and economic

transformation agenda towards a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient Philippines.

There are so many things that we have to do, and that is why I cannot understate the need for us to be united.

So, I ask all of you – continue to be supportive of your government and of the Philippines. You have worked hard to build your lives here. You are the glue that holds us together.

Let us keep traffic bustling between our two homes. Let us continue working together towards building a stronger Philippine Republic. I count on your support.

Maraming, maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat. *[applause]* Mabuhay ang Pilipino! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!

Thank you very much. Mahalo! *[applause]*

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