

Press statement of President Aquino during the official visit of Prime Minister Davutoglu of Turkey

**Press statement
of
His Excellency Benigno S. Aquino III
President of the Philippines
During the official visit of Prime Minister Ahmet of Turkey**

[Delivered in Malacañan Palace, Manila, on November 17, 2014]

Mr. Prime Minister, Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Allow me to welcome the Prime Minister and the delegation of Turkey to the Philippines. Your visit, Mr. Prime Minister, comes at an opportune time as our two nations celebrate 65 years of meaningful diplomatic relations.

Your presence today, reaffirms the friendship our two nations enjoy, and the discussions we had reflect our common commitment to strengthen our relations, broaden the horizon for opportunities between us, and by so doing enable both our peoples to fully realize their potentials.

This morning—and early this afternoon—the Prime Minister and I focused on how we can spur greater economic activity between our nations. Likewise, through the Air Services Agreement, we aim to improve trade and tourism opportunities between us, as the number of our respective citizens visiting both our countries increases. For the Philippines, this agreement will help further expand the operations of our own air services, and is part of our efforts to show to the world that we are indeed more open for business.

We are likewise working on a memorandum of understanding on tourism cooperation, which will cover key areas such as the improvement of investments, marketing, and cultural exchanges, among others. With Turkey as our partner, we look forward to further exploring areas of engagement that will open more doors of opportunity for our respective citizens. To this end, we hope to convene the inaugural meeting of the Philippines-Turkey Joint Economic Commission in Ankara by next year to outline the approaches necessary in realizing our shared objective.

Just as we are committed to ushering in more opportunities for our people, we too are focused on ensuring the gains we achieve are maximized in a stable and secure environment. The Prime Minister and I discussed the threat of ISIS, as well as the danger presented by similar organizations against religious and ethnic minorities in various parts of the world.

We share the belief that it is the fundamental purpose of government to safeguard the welfare of its people, and we seek to fulfill this purpose by working hand-in-hand with our partners at home, within our regions, and in the larger community of nations.

It is with this mindset that I outlined to the Prime Minister our effort to address the issues in the sea known to our region by many names. The Prime Minister, in turn, agreed that maritime disputes should be settled in a peaceful manner and in accordance with international law. The Prime Minister noted that the Philippines' decision to pursue arbitration is one that advances a durable and peaceful resolution to the issue. Likewise, Turkey stands with the Philippines in calling for the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, as well as an expeditious conclusion of a legally-binding Code.

Finally, we wish to take this opportunity to personally thank the Prime Minister for the support and guidance Turkey has provided in our government's pursuit for peace with our brothers in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Just as Turkey showed support for the 1996 GPH-MNLF Peace Agreement, in its capacity as a member of the OIC Peace Committee for Southern Philippines, Turkey continues to be our partner towards establishing a just and lasting peace in Mindanao. Turkey presently participates as a member of the International Contact Group and the Independent Decommissioning Body in our talks with the MILF; I am also told that Turkey supports our position on the closure of the Tripartite Review Process, as regards our discussions with the MNLF.

Mr. Prime Minister, I reiterate the gratitude of the Filipino people for your country's commitment to peace for all. Together, we look to a future of greater possibilities for our countrymen in the Bangsamoro, a future characterized by peace, stability, and equitable progress for Christians, our indigenous brothers, and Muslims in the region.

Mr. Prime Minister, it is our hope that throughout your stay in our country, you will find the time to truly enjoy the warmth and hospitality of our people, a warmth and hospitality that serve as enduring reminders of our deepening friendship.

Thank you, sir. Thank you one and all.

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