

**For media circulation, embargoed until after
the Joint Press Conference 18 April 2024**

**JOINT STATEMENT FOR THE OFFICIAL VISIT OF NEW ZEALAND PRIME
MINISTER CHRISTOPHER LUXON
18-20 APRIL 2024**

1. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. hosted Prime Minister Rt Hon Christopher Luxon on an Official Visit to the Philippines on 18-19 April 2024. President Marcos Jr welcomed Prime Minister Luxon on his first official engagement in the Philippines. Both leaders acknowledged the enduring relationship and cooperation between the Philippines and New Zealand, or engagement on Pacific issues, and shared outlooks addressing common challenges.

Philippines – New Zealand Comprehensive Partnership

2. The leaders acknowledged their mutual desire to strengthen the relationship between the Philippines and New Zealand and to lift the relationship in ways that deliver real benefits and advance our shared security and economic interests.
3. To reflect this mutual desire, and to mark the anniversary of 60 years of bilateral relations, leaders agreed to elevate the bilateral relationship to a Comprehensive Partnership by 2026.
4. The leaders directed their Foreign Ministers and relevant officials to put in place a Roadmap to guide the establishment of the Comprehensive Partnership, including the elevation of the Foreign Ministry Consultations to the Vice-Ministerial level and the creation of new mechanisms including a Joint Economic Commission and a Maritime Dialogue. The two leaders emphasised the importance of further visa facilitation between the Philippines and New Zealand. The expected visit by New Zealand's Foreign Minister to the Philippines later in 2024 would be an opportunity to progress discussions on the Comprehensive Partnership further.

Defence, security and maritime cooperation

5. President Marcos and Prime Minister Luxon acknowledged the strong existing bilateral defence cooperation between New Zealand and the Philippines. They committed to maintaining and strengthening defence engagements while exploring new frameworks of cooperation to deepen defence ties. Both sides committed to the signing of a Mutual Logistics Supporting Arrangement (MLSA) by the end of 2024, and to concluding a Status of Visiting Forces Agreement (SOVFA).

6. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to sustaining maritime security cooperation, including bilateral and multilateral activities at sea, port calls/visits, and capacity-building efforts.
7. As Pacific maritime nations, the two leaders recognized the Philippines and New Zealand's shared interest in preserving peace and stability at sea, and in this regard, looked forward to cooperating on maritime law enforcement, including addressing common threats, such as piracy, IUUF, maritime terrorism, contraband smuggling, wildlife trafficking, and irregular human migration. They also supported further cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster response.
8. The leaders acknowledged scope for further cooperation on transnational organised crime. They welcomed the ongoing efforts to establish a Memorandum of Arrangement on the reciprocal exchange of information in the management of Trafficking in Persons matters between New Zealand and the Philippines. The two Leaders also agreed to explore further cooperation on combatting transnational crimes, specifically money laundering, online sexual abuse and exploitation of children, including through existing multilateral fora.

Trade and economic relations

9. President Marcos and Prime Minister Luxon welcomed the development of stronger economic linkages between the Philippines and New Zealand and reaffirmed their shared commitment to upholding the rules-based trading system. Both Leaders welcomed the upgrade of the ASEAN Australia New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) and the successful implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The two leaders acknowledged the strong collaboration between the countries through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).
10. The Leaders also noted the importance of collaboration with partners across the Indo-Pacific region, including India and the United States, notably within the 14-country Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) for Prosperity, which has concluded agreements on the transition to clean economies and fair economies, as well as commenced implementation of the Supply Chain Agreement in February 2024.
11. Both Leaders acknowledged ongoing cooperation in agriculture. Prime Minister Luxon acknowledged the Philippines' interest in developing the export capability of its agricultural sector and pledged to further discussions between officials on this initiative
12. The two Leaders committed to further eliminating unnecessary barriers to trade and working together to ensure that exporters can fully utilise the comprehensive suite of free trade agreements, with a view to achieving a mutually beneficial increase of 50 percent in two-way trade by 2030.

13. The leaders recognized the importance of further providing an enabling environment for business and investments, including in relation to ease of doing business, capacity and capability building, innovation in service design and delivery, regulatory management, and technology transfer and adoption related to E-governance, government technology and innovation methods and practices.
14. President Marcos welcomed New Zealand's commitment to step up and deepen engagement in the South East Asian region, with both leaders recognising ongoing opportunities for New Zealand and Philippine companies to work together in the areas of agricultural technology and innovation, agribusiness, renewable energy, education and skills, digital infrastructure, including maximizing the Philippines' expertise in information technology and business process management (IT-BPM). The Philippines also welcomes investments in priority sectors and collaboration in sectors where New Zealand's expertise is most valued, such as agriculture, knowledge and skills, and disaster risk management.

People-to-people

15. The Leaders welcomed the growth of people-to-people connections between New Zealand and the Philippines, including the significant and growing Filipino diaspora in New Zealand. Prime Minister Luxon acknowledged the contribution Filipinos make to New Zealand's economy, including through filling critical gaps in New Zealand's workforce. The two Leaders also agreed to discuss social security issues relating to Filipinos in New Zealand.
16. The two Leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation regarding the welfare of migrant workers, particularly Filipino nurses. Both Leaders looked forward to the review of the existing bilateral migrant worker arrangement which will facilitate the recruitment of Filipino workers to New Zealand and other initiatives.
17. The Leaders acknowledged there is scope to expand education cooperation between New Zealand and the Philippines. They welcomed ongoing cooperation between the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Philippines' Commission on Higher Education following the agreed outcomes of the comparability of Bachelor's degrees project between New Zealand and the Philippines. This will support and enhance mobility of students, professionals, and skilled workers.

Renewable energy and climate change

18. The Leaders recognised the need to align climate actions to support the achievement of the goal of holding global average temperature increase to well below 2 degrees Celsius of pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and directed their respective officials to discuss the development of a potential Memorandum of Arrangement. This Arrangement shall relate to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which recognizes that some Parties choose to pursue voluntary cooperation in the implementation of their Nationally Determined Contributions

(NDCs) wherein collaboration may be in the form of sharing of best practices, joint policy initiatives, and strengthening of both countries' response to climate change, among others.

19. Prime Minister Luxon welcomed President Marcos' statement to step up Philippines' engagement with the Pacific Islands Forum as a Dialogue Partner.
20. The Leaders acknowledged the pivotal role of renewable energy (RE) in addressing both climate change and the global economic transition. Consequently, the Leaders acknowledged the long-standing collaboration on RE between New Zealand and the Philippines and agreed to maintain and enhance collaboration to advance RE solutions aimed at transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems and combating climate change. Prime Minister Luxon acknowledged the Philippines' commitment to achieving its RE target of more than 50 percent share in the power generation mix by 2050. President Marcos thanked Prime Minister Luxon for the technical and financial support on the country's RE initiatives, particularly on geothermal energy development through the provision of experts and short-term training scholarships and technical and financial assistance to workshops and international conferences organized by the Philippines.
21. The two leaders agreed to strive to expand the cooperation in the fields of environment and natural resources management, recognizing mutual responsibility, and the importance of protecting and improving the environment.
22. President Marcos welcomed the ongoing development support provided by New Zealand in the Philippines totalling NZ\$31.1million between 2021 and 2024, including funding for climate and economic resilience; knowledge and skills; and peace, security and preventing violent extremism.
23. New Zealand is providing a total of NZ\$19.4 million in climate finance to the Philippines through the Asian Development Bank's Energy Transition Mechanism, which supports the voluntary retirement, repurposing or replacement of coal-fired power plants with more renewable sources of energy; the United Nations-led Empower initiative in support of women in climate resilient societies; and through the ASEAN Climate Smart Agriculture Initiative in support of technologies and practices to mitigate agricultural emissions. New Zealand has also supported sustainable commercial forestry initiatives in the past.
24. Prime Minister Luxon reiterated New Zealand's support for the Mindanao peace process. New Zealand is providing support to the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund that works with local organisations to promote peace, good governance and livelihood opportunities for communities in Mindanao.
25. To develop knowledge and skills in the Philippines, New Zealand will continue to fund, through the Manaaki New Zealand Scholarship Programme, tertiary scholarships and short-term cohort courses. New Zealand prioritises scholarships in the areas of

Climate Change and the Environment, Disaster Management, Food Security and Agriculture, Renewable Energy, and Governance.

Regional and global developments

26. President Marcos and Prime Minister Luxon also exchanged views on regional and global developments.
27. Prime Minister Luxon acknowledged the role of the Philippines within ASEAN. The Leaders reaffirmed the importance of ASEAN Centrality and of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific to peace, stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region. The Leaders agreed to continue to work closely with ASEAN in ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum. President Marcos acknowledged New Zealand's intention to elevate its relationship to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with ASEAN in 2025, in recognition of 50 years of New Zealand's dialogue relationship with ASEAN.
28. On the South China Sea, President Marcos and Prime Minister Luxon expressed shared serious concern over recent developments. They reaffirmed the right of freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the seas accorded by international law particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). UNCLOS is the basis for determining maritime entitlements, sovereign rights, jurisdiction and legitimate interests over maritime zones. They reaffirmed the need for all states to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, including dispute settlement mechanisms under UNCLOS. The Leaders reiterated that UNCLOS sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. They recognised the 2016 arbitral award, which is final and binding.
29. The two leaders reaffirmed that all parties must fully implement the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, and reiterated their support for ASEAN-led efforts for the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct for the South China Sea that upholds the legitimate rights and interests of all parties and is consistent with UNCLOS.
30. Both Leaders also recognised the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.
31. Prime Minister Luxon and President Marcos expressed serious concern on the dire humanitarian situation and tragic loss of innocent Israeli and Palestinian life following the 7 October terrorist attacks. Prime Minister Luxon offered his condolences for the Filipino migrant workers that lost their lives, and expressed sympathy for those that remain captive. The Leaders reaffirmed their calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to allow urgent delivery of aid. They also called for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and adherence to international law, including international humanitarian law. The Leaders also shared the international community's serious

concerns about broader regional escalation in the Middle East, particularly Iran's recent strikes on Israel, and urged maximum restraint on all sides.

32. The Leaders expressed serious concern at Russia's aggression against Ukraine, noting it was a clear violation of the principles of the UN Charter, and that it has now been over two years since it began. They reaffirmed their ongoing commitment to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, recalling the 1982 Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes, which reaffirms the principle that all States shall settle their disputes through peaceful means. They reiterated their support for a comprehensive, just and durable peace in Ukraine. They acknowledged the global impact of the war, including on food and energy security in the Indo-Pacific region.
33. Prime Minister Luxon and President Marcos acknowledged the third anniversary of the 1 February military coup in Myanmar and their deep concern for the deteriorating situation. They called on the military regime to immediately cease violence, release those arbitrarily detained, provide full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and create space for meaningful and inclusive dialogue. They affirmed their strong support for ASEAN-led efforts as guided by the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus and encouraged the international community to work together in a pragmatic and constructive way to support an end to the violence in Myanmar.