

Presidential Communications Operations Office

Presidential News Desk

**JOINT PRESS STATEMENTS OF
PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE
AND SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT MAITHRIPALA SIRISENA**

[Reception Hall, Malacañan Palace | 16 January 2019]

PRESIDENT RODRIGO DUTERTE: Kindly sit down. Thank you.

Good afternoon. I am pleased to welcome President Maithripala Sirisena to Manila.

Your visit, Mr. President, is historic. In the nearly six decades of [our] formal diplomatic relations, you are the very first Sri Lankan President – serving as Head of State and Government – to visit the Philippines. And indeed, your State Visit is held for a very good reason.

The Philippines and Sri Lanka are developing maritime nations. We face common challenges, we have shared interests, and we are united by our desire to provide greater peace, progress and prosperity for our peoples.

These realities and aspirations behoove upon us to work together even more closely to provide renewed impetus and clearer direction for a greatly expanded partnership.

In our meetings, we resolved to further strengthen our engagement in trade, defense, agriculture and tourism, education, cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

We both recognized that the proliferation of illegal drugs is a threat to our nations and peoples and to the very fabric of [our] growing societies.

We acknowledged that poverty reduction and long-term sustainable development are cornerstones of our efforts to improve the lives of our peoples.

We also discussed mutual concerns on strengthening cooperation in defense and security. We know that the growth we desire can only be achieved with peace, order and stability.

This state of affairs is to be desired not only for both our countries but across the region.

In this regard, we renewed our commitment to adhere to the rule of law, to act as responsible members of the international community, and to work together constructively in all relevant regional and international organizations.

The Philippines hopes that with Sri Lanka, we can explore wider cooperation and greater collaborative action [across] many fields in the international fora.

The Philippines recognizes [that] Sri Lanka can be a partner in advancing migrant workers' rights and welfare; disaster risk reduction, response and management; as well as in strengthening our maritime security and addressing the trafficking of illegal drugs and human smuggling.

Only when we work together with like-minded nations can we ensure that our interests are protected and upheld.

I said this before and let me say it again: The Philippines' destiny is in Asia. Sri Lanka's destiny is also in Asia. Asia's destiny lies among Asians.

[It is] in the spirit of mutual respect, sincerity and collaboration that President Sirisena and I are now planting the seeds for rapid growth in our relations. We are firm in our belief that [with] our commitment, we will reap a bountiful harvest for the benefit of our peoples.

Thank you very much. *[applause]*

PRESIDENT MAITHRIPALA SIRISENA: Good evening.

I convey warm greetings from the people of Sri Lanka to the people of the Philippines with whom we share a close friendship.

Your Excellency President Rodrigo Duterte, thank you for the opportunity for me to undertake this State Visit which is taking place after 58 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Sri Lanka and the Philippines share a longstanding relationship with connections dating back to several decades. We share close people to people contacts which is very evident and established by the visits made by the Philippines National Hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, to Sri Lanka in the 19th century.

As President Duterte just mentioned, we had very productive discussion this afternoon on priority areas such as defense and security, trade and investment, agriculture, education and higher education, labour, tourism, cultural cooperation, maritime, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, among others. We both are pleased on the outcome of our discussion.

We have agreed on several concrete initiatives to deepen our relations. Along with President Duterte, I and my Government will ensure that these initiatives will be implemented in order to harness the maximum to the people of the both countries.

I commend President Duterte and the Government of the Philippines for the successful Chairmanship during ASEAN's 50th Anniversary in 2017 and look forward to support of the Philippines for Sri Lanka's inclusion as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner in ASEAN.

I have extended an invitation to President Duterte to undertake a State Visit to Sri Lanka at an early date.

President Duterte, your visit to Sri Lanka will provide an opportunity to evaluate the progress of the initiatives which we have discussed during my visit. I look forward to welcome you and Madam Duterte. We will carry forward our discussion and consider further steps, to manifest thoughts into deeds.

This visit has strengthened the long and trusted friendship between our two countries.

We have taken steps to reinvigorate our relations which our two countries and people so richly deserve.

I carry with me very fond memories of this State Visit while further strengthening the bonds of friendship with your country.

Long live Sri Lanka-Philippines friendship!

Thank you. *[applause]*

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