

**Presidential Communications Operations Office
Presidential News Desk**

**PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS OF AMBASSADORS-DESIGNATE
FROM THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC, KINGDOM OF SWEDEN, STATE OF
ISRAEL, AND SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA**

[Held at the Reception Hall in Malacañan Palace, Manila | 20 October 2021]

HIS EXCELLENCY MARCO CLEMENTE (ITALIAN REPUBLIC): It's an honor to present to you the letter of credentials appointing me as Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines together with the letter of recall of my predecessor.

The President of the Italian Republic Sergio Mattarella instructed me to convey to you the assurances of his sincere friendship and that of the Italian nation, along with the warmest greetings of prosperity for you and for the people of the Philippines.

You give me exceptional privilege to mark in this beautiful building the official beginning of my mission on the eve of the 75th year of our diplomatic relations, an anniversary which we will celebrate next year.

I would like to assure you, Mr. President, that I will spend more effort in further strengthening and expanding the profound friendship and cooperation between our two countries, both bilaterally and in the multilateral context such as the UN and the ASEAN.

As for multilateral initiatives, allow me to emphasize in particular the role played by Italy this year as partner of the United Kingdom in chairing COP26 and the cooperation that our two countries can further develop in the environmental field.

In this regard, it was a pleasure and a great promising sign for the future to see two young participants from the Philippines also attending the side event Youth4Climate which Italy organized last September in the Milan pre-COP in preparation of the forthcoming Glasgow Conference.

Mr. President, the friendship between our two nations is based not only upon a growing cooperation in many fields such as --- to name just a few --- defense, energy, infrastructure, sustainable development, tourism and

agriculture, but also upon the presence of a very numerous and industrious Filipino community in Italy. A presence, I can assure you, that the Italian people consider as a precious enrichment of their society.

The COVID emergency has severely hit the whole world and did not spare our two countries. But I believe that tragedies like this cannot [unclear] the bonds between peoples. Together, we will finally get out from this nightmare stronger and more united than ever.

Please count on Italy, Mr. President, for any support we can provide to help you quickly recover from the pandemic, also with the donation of extra doses of vaccine for your population.

Thank you very, very much for your hospitality and your kind attention. Long live the Philippines! Long live Italy! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! Mabuhay ang Italya! Maraming salamat.

PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE: Excellency, I am pleased to accept your credentials as Ambassador of the Italian Republic to the Republic of the Philippines.

Next year we will celebrate 75 years of warm and friendly ties between our countries. We look forward to a meaningful celebration of this milestone, with a view to further enhancing our cooperative ties.

The Philippines seeks Italy's support for the resumption of the discussions on the Philippines-European Union (EU) Free Trade Agreement. This is key to broadening our economic relations and accelerating the post-pandemic recovery.

The Philippines also congratulates Italy on becoming a Development Partner of ASEAN. We appreciate your government's sponsorship of capacity-building programs on civil defense and cybercrime for ASEAN Member States.

Excellency, the Philippines has recently assumed the role of coordinator for ASEAN-EU Relations for the period of 2021-2024. We count on Italy's support for this important undertaking.

I trust that our relations --- bilaterally and within ASEAN as well as in the UN --- will continue to flourish in the years ahead.

I wish Your Excellency a fruitful tour of duty in the Philippines and congratulations.

HER EXCELLENCY ANNIKA THUNBORG (SWEDEN): Your Excellency, let me extend the friendly greeting of His Majesty Carl XVI Gustaf, King of Sweden, recalling the relations of friendship, esteemed, and good understanding which so happily have subsisted between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Republic of the Philippines since the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries in 1947.

We look forward to celebrating these relations on several occasions in events and commemorations during our 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations that take place next year in 2022.

I, as a representative of my government and of my country, look forward to devote my efforts to strengthen our friendly relations in the areas of trade and direct investments, and international, political and cultural affairs, and to do so with key stakeholders in our respective nations.

In this context, let me extend my gratitude to you, Mr. President, and to your office for approving the grant provided to the Department of Transportation by the Swedish Development Cooperation Act or Swedfund that will be used to finance technical assistance carried out by Swedish technology expert company Sweco for the EDSA Busway.

As you are well aware, Mr. President, the Swedish government and the Swedish companies have worked closely with your public and private sectors with the focus on sustainable solutions ever since the Swedish Embassy in Manila reopened in 2016. With the Philippines reopening its embassy in Stockholm last year, our collaboration in specific projects will certainly be strengthened even further.

Your Excellency, I have the honor to present my letter of credence as Ambassador Extraordinary --- Extraordinary, I'm sorry, I will do that again. Your Excellency, I have the honor to present my letter of credence as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Sweden to the Republic of the Philippines and the letter of recall of my predecessor.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: I am pleased to accept Your Excellency's credentials as Ambassador of Sweden to the Philippines.

Next year we will celebrate 75 years of robust relations between the Philippines and Sweden.

We are very pleased with Sweden's growing interest in the Philippines. I note that several Swedish companies have entered the Philippine market, including the global brand Ikea. We are keen on improving our ties in trade and investment.

I thank Sweden for the technical assistance grant for the improvement of the EDSA Busway. Enhanced mass transportation services and other key programs are important areas of cooperation to improve the quality of lives of Filipinos. Let us continue working on these.

Excellency, let me thank you and Sweden for being a good host to around 15,000 Filipinos. As healthcare workers, engineers, service workers, and seafarers, they contribute positively to Sweden's society as well as to my nation's development.

Congratulations, Your Excellency. May you enjoy the warm hospitality of the Filipino people.

HIS EXCELLENCY ILAN FLUSS (STATE OF ISRAEL): Your Excellency, Mr. President, I'd like to extend the personal greetings of President Isaac "Bougie" Herzog. I have the honor to present my letter of credence as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Israel to the Republic of the Philippines and the letter of recall of my predecessor.

On a personal note, having already been fortunate to experience this great country and its people as the second secretary at the Israeli Embassy in Manila in 1995, I'm delighted to be back in the Philippines this time as the Israeli Ambassador.

Our relations go way back. During the Holocaust, the Philippines stood alone in opening your doors to around 1,300 Jewish refugees escaping the terrors of Nazi Germany. In 1947, the supportive vote of the Philippines at the United Nations was critical for the establishment of the modern State of Israel.

In the face of opposition, yours was the only country in Asia to vote in favor of establishing Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. Since then, our countries' cooperation and partnership have grown, diversified, and matured.

MASHAV, Israel's International Development Cooperation Agency, has given the Philippines the highest priority status in its capacity building and technical assistance programs. This year, Israel will host 400 young Filipino

university graduates again to train them in modern agricultural farming practices, giving them valuable skills that they will take home.

Humanitarian assistance is at the heart of the Jewish tradition and we stand by you in times of needs. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Israel sent teams of health experts and medical equipment. In the aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda in 2013, we sent field hospital and other teams and equipment.

The 30,000 devoted Filipino caregivers working in Israel today have become integral and valued members of our society. Their rights are protected by the agreement signed during your historic visit to Israel.

Mr. President, recently, Israel has opened two new offices in Manila: defense and trade. Last October, we inaugurated the Israel Honorary Consulate in Davao joining the existing one in Cebu. Cooperation in defense is very intimate and close. It is essential for both countries and it is critical for the safety and security of the Philippines and Israel.

Israel is a small country but it is a global hub of innovation, entrepreneurship, and technologies in various areas such as climate tech, agri tech, water tech, fintech, cyber tech.

Mr. President, innovation and technology are not the future --- they are the present. And the development of more cooperation in this field is one of my main goals for the years ahead. This will contribute to the sustainable development, improve lives, create jobs, generate income, and enable the transfer and relevant know-how and technologies.

Mr. President, during your historic visit to Israel, you witnessed with your own eyes the Holy Land and its history, the culture, the people, the technologies, and the creative potential. You saw how the desert can bloom and how one can make water out of air, how we protect our people from terror attacks using the most sophisticated systems. You met the Filipino caregivers and students who have been warmly welcomed in Israel.

Your visit has injected more interest, energy, and enthusiasm to promote our relations even further.

Mr. President, I truly hope that with your support and guidance, I will be able to make a modest contribution to the furthering of our countries' friendship and partnership and to our continued work towards the prosperity of both the Philippines and Israel.

Thank you, Mr. President, for accepting my credentials, and may God bless our two countries and people with great friendship, peace, and prosperity.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: I am pleased to accept Your Excellency's credentials as Ambassador of the State of Israel to the Republic of the Philippines.

I understand this is your second assignment in the Philippines. I hope that you will have the opportunity to travel across the country and reconnect with the Filipino people as you carry out your duties as Ambassador.

We recently commemorated over six decades of friendly and cooperative ties between our countries. We look forward to even deeper and broader engagement in Israel in the years ahead, particularly in defense, labor, and tourism.

I thank your government for the hospitality and concern for the safety and well-being of Filipinos in Israel.

We are grateful for your timely COVID-19 assistance through vaccines, medical supplies, equipment and sharing of technical expertise and best practices on pandemic response.

This is a partnership that works well for both our countries.

Congratulations, Excellency. I wish Your Excellency will have a fruitful assignment in the Philippines.

Welcome back!

HIS EXCELLENCY LEOPOLDO LAZATIN (SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA): Your Excellency, the Sovereign Order of Malta will continue its efforts to contribute to the upliftment of our people and move forward to a greater opportunity to working together with the Philippine Government in this regard.

For the past decades, the Philippines and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta have enjoyed diplomatic relations with each other and we provide a continuous shared interest in partnership and support the programs of the government in particular the plight of the needy poor and their sake.

In the past, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta has worked in disaster-stricken areas as well as assistance to providing more than a thousand homes for them. Since the upsurge of the COVID pandemic, the Order has extended its programs for these areas affected by the calamity, especially in the Metro Manila area for the disadvantaged, the poor people.

We hope, Mr. President, that we will continue to do so and that we will prosper in meeting the humanitarian needs of the people especially working with the government agencies and the LGUs.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Excellency, I am pleased to accept your credentials as Ambassador of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to the Republic of the Philippines.

The Order's sustained humanitarian work in the Philippines throughout the pandemic is laudable. We are grateful for the Order's assistance to communities through feeding programs, medical missions, and disaster relief operations.

Excellency, the Order may wish to consider helping displaced OFWs who have returned to the Philippines. Your expanded humanitarian programs will go a long way in helping them recover.

I note the proposal of the Philippine Embassy in Vatican for the Order and the Filipino people --- community --- in Rome to cooperate, particularly on migration issues. I hope that this initiative will be realized for the benefit of all migrant workers.

Congratulations, Excellency. I wish you a productive tour of duty.

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