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OPPORTUNITIES
FOR GOVERNANCE
AND DEVELOPMENT:
**RECOMMENDATIONS
AND STRATEGIES
FOR PROGRESS**



OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT: RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR PROGRESS

This paper discusses the current socio-economic conditions in the Philippines and highlights recommendations and strategies toward national prosperity, a more effective governance of public affairs, and a more productive collaborative and cross-sectoral leadership.

National development demands a multidimensional approach to progress.¹ Aside from the economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects of development, the political aspect is essential. It is in this light where the state needs to be brought back in development analysis.²

The state's involvement in the Philippine development process under the Duterte administration 2016 - 2022 jeopardized the democratic way of handling public affairs. During this period, Philippine governance showed an ebbing of democracy.

Today, the Marcos Jr. leadership is challenging the pro-China, illiberal, and whimsical manner of governance of former President Rodrigo Duterte. Such is demonstrated by the firm stand on the West Philippine Sea, the banning of Philippine Offshore Gaming

Operators (POGOs), the shift toward a “bloodless” war on drugs, and the pursuit of economic diplomacy with like-minded countries and entities.

This paper aims to explain how socio-economic conditions challenge Filipinos and their government to highlight the opportunities available for governance reforms and economic development. As it embarks on the social conditions spurred by the evolving national and international conditions, this paper is particularly premised on the culmination of the second year of the Marcos Jr. administration. In turn, recommendations and their underlying strategies or policy imperatives are presented. These serve as an iterative reminder for the current administration of its Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028, the blueprint in achieving socioeconomic transformation for a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient society.

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PERCEPTIONS FROM THE GROUND

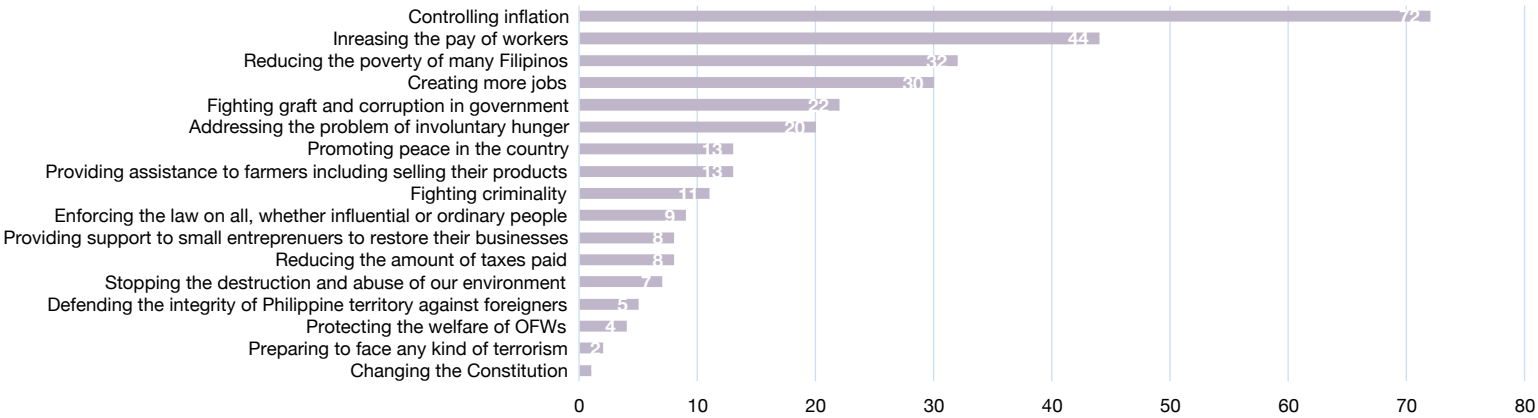
Largely influenced by regional and international geopolitical conditions, national economic, social, environmental, and political changes serve as both positive and negative disruptors of the everyday life of Filipinos and affect their gut concerns.

MOST URGENT NATIONAL CONCERNS

According to a Pulse Asia Research Inc. study conducted from June 17–24, 2024, seven out of ten Filipinos, or 72%, are very concerned about managing inflation for the second quarter of 2024. This is an increase of 2% from the first quarter. A smaller portion of the public is concerned with alleviating poverty (32%, posting a 7% increase) and creating jobs (30%, posting a 5% increase), whereas a bigger plurality of Filipinos, or 44%, are more worried with raising worker pay (posing an 8% increase). In addition, aside from these internal problems, 22% of Filipinos are most concerned about combating graft and corruption. Still, there has been a 4% decrease in this.³

Of these issues and concerns, controlling inflation received better scores in Mindanao (77%), Balance of Luzon (74%), Class E (74%), and Class D (73%), across all geographic and class categories. There is a greater sense of urgency to raise worker wage in the Visayas (51%), NCR (46%), Balance of Luzon (45%), and Class D (45%). While combating graft and corruption received higher ratings in the NCR (26%), Class ABC (25%), and Balance of Luzon (24%), poverty reduction received higher ratings in Class ABC (37%) and Balance of Luzon (36%). Job creation received higher ratings in both Balance of Luzon (32%) and Class D (31%).

FIGURE 1 . MOST URGENT NATIONAL CONCERNS: PHILIPPINES
JUNE 17-24, 2024 / PR1&2
(IN PERCENT / MULTIPLE RESPONSE ALLOWED)



SOURCE: PULSE ASIA RESEARCH, INC.

TABLE 1 . MOST URGENT NATIONAL CONCERNS OVERALL: PHILIPPINES
JUNE 17-24, 2024 / PR1&2
(IN PERCENT / MULTIPLE RESPONSE/ UP TO 3 ALLOWED)

Base: Total Interviews 100%								
NATIONAL CONCERNS	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
Controlling inflation	72	67	74	66	77	64	73	74
Increasing the pay of workers	44	46	45	51	33	33	45	43
Reducing the poverty of many Filipinos	32	32	36	22	31	37	31	32
Creating more jobs	30	28	32	29	27	21	31	30
Fighting graft and corruption in government	22	26	24	18	19	25	22	20
Addressing the problem of involuntary hunger	20	14	15	29	25	22	19	24

SOURCE: PULSE ASIA RESEARCH, INC.

Internal and external factors have been at play since the Marcos Jr. administration took office on June 30, 2022, and the top concerns among Filipinos have been (1) keeping inflation under control (67%); (2) raising worker wages (43%); (3) creating jobs (30%); (4) reducing poverty (28%); and (5) combating graft and corruption (23%).

SELF-RATED POVERTY

According to the most recent nationwide Social Weather Stations survey, which was conducted from June 23 to July 1, 2024, 58% of Filipino households identify themselves as Poor or Mahirap, 12% as Borderline (the space between Poor and Not Poor), and 30% as Not Poor or Hindi Mahirap.⁴

Self-rated Not Poor families rose by 7% (from 23% to 30%) in comparison to the previous quarter, while Borderline families fell by 18% (30% to 12%) and Poor families rose by 12% (from 46% to 58%).

With the first quarter of 2024 as baseline, the number of self-rated Poor families peaked in Mindanao, from 56% to 71%. Increases in varying degrees were also noted in Balance Luzon (from 38% to 52%), Metro Manila (from 33% to 39%), and the Visayas (from 64% to 67%). The impact of the increase in the number of Borderline families were most felt and manifested in these areas.

The decrease in the number for the Borderline families was severely experienced in Mindanao (35% to 11%) and Balance Luzon (31% to 11%), followed by Manila (27% to 15%) and the Visayas (25% to 15%).

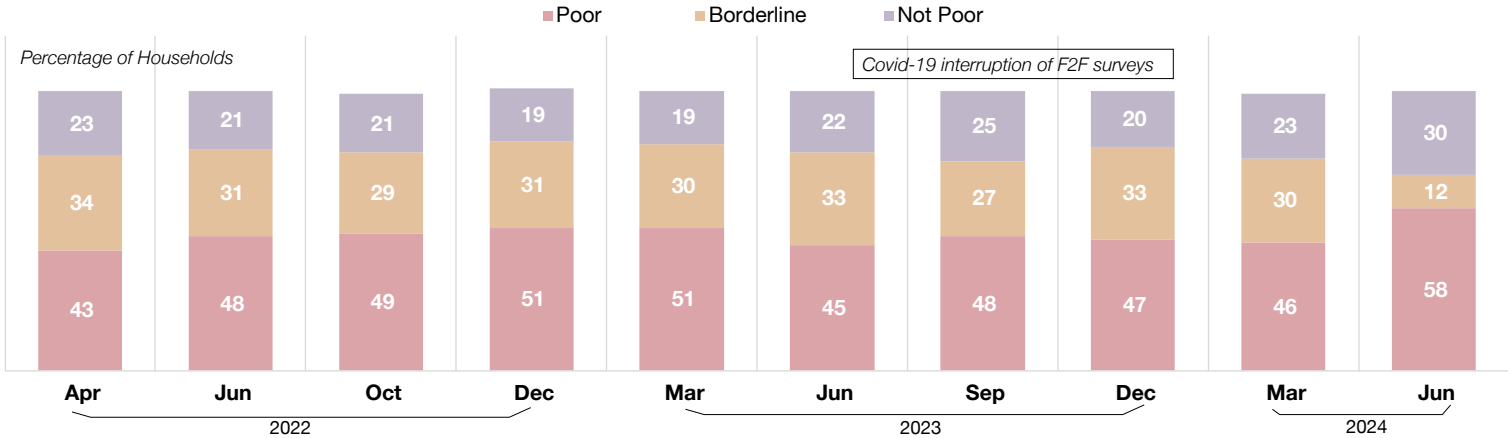
Further, the increase of self-rating for Not Poor families, however, accordingly manifested in the areas of Balance Luzon (from 30% to 37%), Metro Manila (from 41% to 46%), the Visayas (from 11% to 18%), and Mindanao (from 9% to 17%).

TABLE 2 . MOST URGENT NATIONAL CONCERNS
3RD QUARTER OF 2022 – 2ND QUARTER OF 2024

Urgent Concerns	3Q 2022	4Q 2022	1Q 2023	2Q 2023	3Q 2023	4Q 2023	1Q 2024	2Q 2024	AVE
Controlling inflation	66	59	63	63	74	72	70	72	67
Increasing the pay of workers	44	40	44	44	49	40	36	44	43
Creating jobs	35	33	30	31	27	28	25	30	30
Reducing poverty	34	28	28	30	25	25	25	32	28
Fighting graft and corruption	22	25	26	25	22	19	26	22	23

SOURCE: PULSE ASIA RESEARCH, INC.

FIGURE 2 . SELD-RATED: POOR (“MAHIRAP”), BORDERLINE, AND NOT POOR (“HINDI MAHIRAP”): PHILIPPINES
OCTOBER 2022 TO JUNE 2024



SOURCE: PULSE ASIA RESEARCH, INC.

In Metro Manila, the number of self-rated families who are Not Poor (Hindi Mahirap) averaged at 38%, while the Borderline families averaged by 25%, and the Poor (Mahirap) families averaged at 37%. In Balance Luzon, the families who rated themselves as Not Poor averaged at 30%, while the Borderline families averaged by 29% and the Poor families averaged at 41%. In the Visayas, 11% was the average of Poor families, while 27% for the Borderline and 62% for the Poor families. Lastly, in Mindanao, 63% was the average for Poor families, while 28% for the Borderline, and 9% for the Not Poor families.

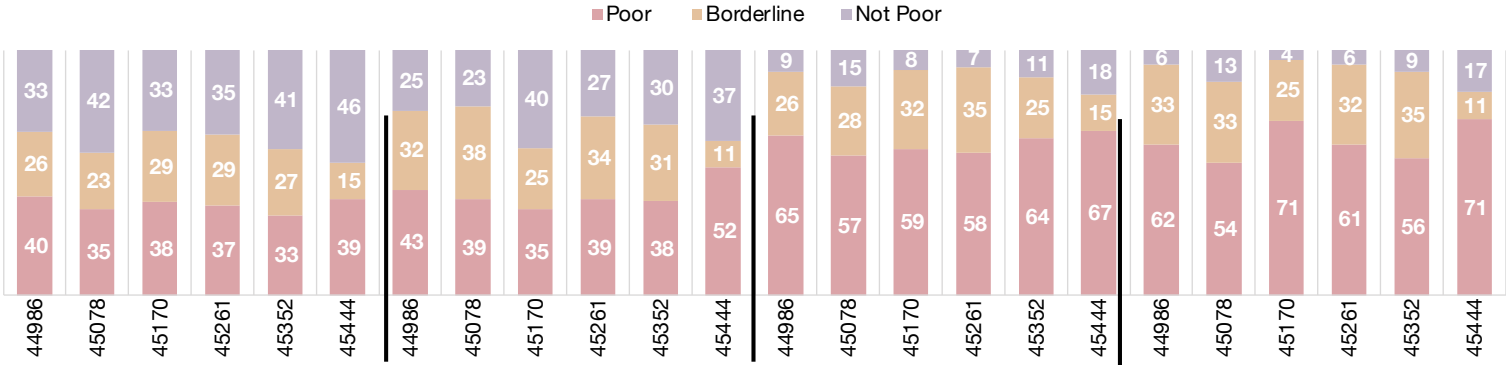
Throughout the previous two years or eight quarters, the average percentage of self-rated food-poor households was 36%; the average percentage of self-rated borderline food-poor families was 34%; and the average percentage of self-rated not food-poor families was 30%.

ATTRACTING FOREIGN INVESTMENTS

The push to attract investments, given their potential to create jobs, generate income, and fuel economic growth, is aligned to what Filipinos want, as reflected in surveys.

The Pulse Asia Research, Inc. survey, commissioned by the Stratbase ADR Institute in the first quarter of 2024, found that the most significant factors considered by Filipinos to hinder foreign investment in the Philippines are complicated rules and regulations like red tape as well as continuing changes in government policies and regulations (56%), restrictive rules on foreign ownership (55%), and corruption in the public sector (46%).

FIGURE 3 . SELD-RATED POVERTY FAMILIES WHO ARE“MAHIRAP”BY AREA: PHILIPPINES
MARCH 2023 TO JUNE 2024



SOURCE: PULSE ASIA RESEARCH, INC.

TABLE 3 . MOST SIGNIFICANT FACTOR THAT HINDERS FOREIGN INVESTMENT: PHILIPPINES
MARCH 6-10, 2024
(IN PERCENT / MULTIPLE RESPONSE/ UP TO 3 ALLOWED)

Base: Total Interviews, 100%								
Which of the following do you think is the most significant factor that hinders foreign investment in the Philippines? You may choose up to three.	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
Complicated rules and regulations like red tape, changes in government policies and regulations	56	58	55	61	50	66	55	52
Restrictive rules on foreign ownership	55	51	55	65	48	57	54	56
Corruption in the public sector	46	50	51	42	38	45	46	49
Inadequate transportation infrastructure	40	37	41	45	38	36	42	36
High Cost of Electricity	37	43	39	39	26	27	38	40
Inadequate telecommunications infrastructure	32	32	34	27	34	27	34	27
The incentive for investors is not enough	21	16	17	18	33	17	21	22
UNAIDED	2	2	2	0	4	6	2	1
Refused								

SOURCE: PULSE ASIA RESEARCH, INC.

ON OPENING BUSINESSES TO FOREIGN INVESTORS

To boost investments that will lead to economic growth and development, opening up local businesses to foreign investors also implies the governance imperative of ensuring responsible investments.

According to the same survey, 37% of Filipinos agree that having more foreigners open businesses in the Philippines is the best way to boost the country’s economic growth and development. Around 25% expressed disagreement while 37% were undecided. This suggests that Filipinos perceive local investors to have a more crucial role in the country’s progress. For decades, the country’s economy has been largely fueled by domestic investors and economic growth has been driven by domestic consumption.⁵

This varied response is qualified by Filipinos’ perception of the outcome of removing restrictions against foreign investors or private enterprises. Across demographics, the removal of restrictions against foreign investors or business is seen as beneficial to the domestic economy. The perceived results or advantages are the following: an increase in high quality jobs with high salaries and better benefits (64%), services to stakeholders/customers will be better (56%), and the price of goods and services will decrease (54%). However, 55% are concerned that foreign capital will dominate local investors and businesses while 43% believe that national security will be at risk.⁶

THE PRESIDENT’S FOREIGN TRIPS

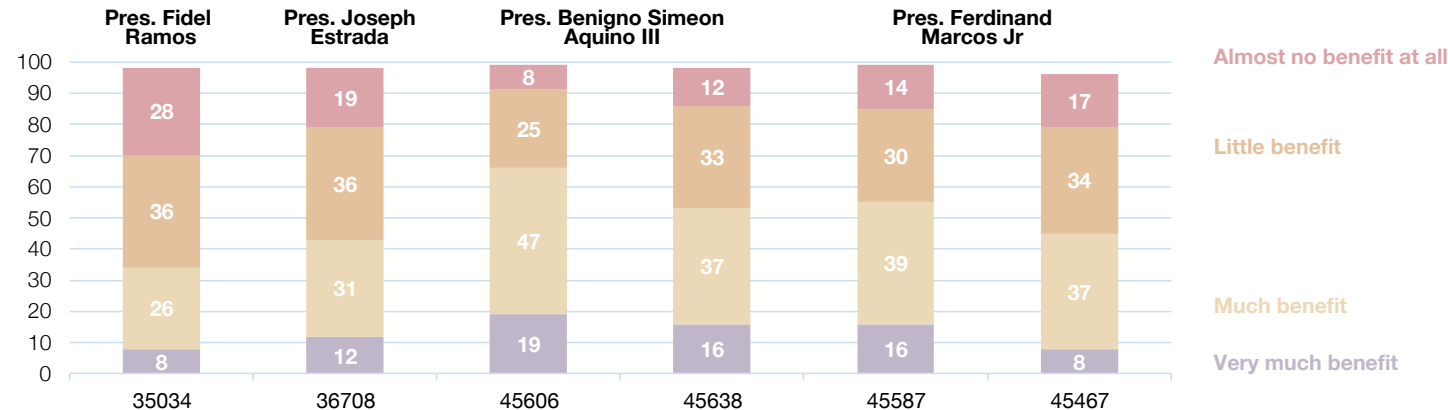
In the aspect of foreign relations and economic diplomacy, the Philippines stands to gain substantively by strengthening its economic ties with strategic partners like the United States in light of the recent Presidential Trade and Investment Mission in March 2024. After all, while existing bilateral and multilateral relations are generally

TABLE 4 . POSSIBLE OUTCOME OF THE REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIONS AGAINST FOREIGN INVESTORS OR BUSINESSES IN OUR CONSTITUTION
MARCH 6-10, 2024
(IN PERCENT / MULTIPLE RESPONSE/ UP TO 3 ALLOWED)

Base: Total Interviews, 100%								
Which of the following may occur or result from the removal of restrictions against foreign investors or businesses in our Constitution? You may choose up to three and mention others not included in this list.	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
An increase in high quality jobs with high salaries and better benefits	64	64	61	80	59	62	65	65
Services to stakeholders/customers will be better	56	51	57	67	47	64	54	58
Foreign capital will dominate local investors and businesses	55	53	57	54	54	54	56	52
The price of goods and services will decrease	54	55	52	61	52	42	54	63
National security will be at risk	43	38	51	32	37	46	43	37
UNAIDED	5	8	6	0	7	8	5	2
Refused								

SOURCE: PULSE ASIA RESEARCH, INC.

FIGURE 4 . PERCEIVED EXTENT OF BENEFIT FROM THE PRESIDENT’S FOREIGN VISITS: PHILIPPINES
DECEMBER 1995, JULY 2000, NOVEMBER 2010 AND DECEMBER 2012, OCTOBER 2022 AND JUNE 2024



SOURCE: SOCIAL WEATHER STATIONS

nurtured through foreign visitations, new relations are simultaneously forged in pursuing and conducting economic diplomacy.

By prioritizing investment opportunities from these partners, particularly in the manufacturing sector, the government anticipates the generation of more high-quality jobs, thereby enhancing human capital and fortifying the labor market. Moreover, with the issuance of the IRR of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Code, public-private sector collaborations are now institutionalized; this serves as the impetus for policy consistency. While investment pledges are encouraging, the real barometer for the success of the mission platforms is the number and volume of actual investments plowed into the country to open up new opportunities for job creation, business expansion, revenues, and inclusive growth.

As to the extent of being beneficial or not, 69% or almost seven out ten Filipinos say that President Marcos Jr.'s foreign visits are beneficial to the country, with 8% saying the Philippines will very much benefit, 37% much benefit, 34% little benefit, and 17% almost no benefit at all.

POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE BES AND CES SURVEYS

The Philippine economy has remained strong despite local and global economic challenges. Still, while new laws have been enacted to boost employment and entrepreneurship, corruption remains a significant obstacle to sustained and investment-led growth.

The political opportunities that can be extracted from the Business Expectations Survey⁷ (BES) and the Consumer Expectations Survey⁸ (CES) conducted by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas from the 3rd quarter of 2023 to the 2nd quarter of 2024 focus on economic growth, governance strategies, and stakeholder engagement.

The government has made efforts to simplify business regulations,

reducing the time and cost of compliance. Under the Marcos Jr. administration, there has been noticeable economic growth in the first two years. This momentum exemplifies that economic stability is crucial, with the BES focusing on risk assessment and the CES on inflation management. Altogether, these call for policies that ensure stability, manage inflation, address risks, and support industries during economic downturns and headwinds.

Governance opportunities identified from the BES and CES surveys include sector-specific strategies, stakeholder engagement, risk assessment, data-driven decision-making, support for small and medium-sized businesses, infrastructure development, and promotion of fair trade practices. To this end, sector-specific strategies should be developed to address sector challenges and promote growth, as highlighted by the BES and CES.

In establishing cross-sectoral collaboration, stakeholder engagement requires government to involve businesses, households, and consumers in decision-making processes. For policy effectiveness, monitoring and evaluation are key, with a focus on tracking sector trends, consumer behavior, and savings to make informed decisions.

Further, supporting economic recovery is vital and should produce tangible results in the aspects of job creation, and assistance to small and medium-sized businesses and industries affected by economic downturns.

In essence, the Philippine economy in 2023 was more resilient and current projections indicate that it could again grow respectably in 2024. Noteworthy are growth strategies of the manufacturing sector focusing on resilient supply chains, self-sufficiency, and attracting investments and the growth of the Information Technology Business Process Outsourcing (IT-BPO) sector and the benefits of hybrid work setups. Further, perceived economic growth scenarios include slower, soft landing and accelerated growth; stable growth

projections for the consumer and retail sectors; the impact of the Universal Health Care Act on the healthcare sector; and sustainability opportunities in renewable energy, electric mobility, and nature-based solutions for green growth.⁹

ONTO THE MIDYEAR AND BEYOND

Based on these discussions on the most urgent national concerns, self-rated poverty, the benefits from the President's foreign trips, and the governance opportunities extracted from the BES and CES surveys for the past two years, we present the following recommendations and strategies to the Marcos Jr. administration.

The first recommendation is to continually pursue national prosperity where progress should be felt by population and all sectors. This can be achieved by:

1. *Addressing urgent national concerns:* The administration should simultaneously address the most urgent national concerns, such as controlling inflation, increasing the pay of workers, and reducing poverty. This can be done by implementing effective economic policies, promoting fair wages, and implementing poverty alleviation programs.

2. *Promoting investment-led economic growth and job creation:* Creating more jobs and promoting economic growth must be a key focus for the administration. These can be achieved through implementing policies that attract beneficial investments, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, and providing incentives for industries that have the potential to generate employment. The manufacturing sector plays a very important role in this aspect.

3. *Investing in infrastructure development:* Infrastructure development plays a crucial role in promoting economic growth and

improving the quality of life of citizens. The administration should prioritize infrastructure projects that address key needs, such as transportation, energy, and water supply, while ensuring efficient and sustainable implementation.

4. *Promoting sustainable development*: The administration should prioritize sustainable development by implementing policies that address environmental concerns and promote the use of renewable energy sources. This can include investing in clean energy infrastructure, implementing environmental regulations, and promoting sustainable practices in industries.

Second, to facilitate national economic growth and development, governance of public affairs should be more effective and this can be realized by:

5. *Enhancing transparency and accountability and upholding good governance practices*: To address the population's concerns about graft and corruption, the administration should focus on strengthening transparency and accountability measures in government. This involves implementing anti-corruption initiatives, promoting transparency in public procurement processes, and strengthening oversight mechanisms. Further, good governance entails institutional reforms, integrity, the ethical conduct of public service, and strengthening the rule of law.

6. *Harnessing digital transformation*: Embracing digital transformation can enhance governance and service delivery. The administration should invest in digital infrastructure, promote e-governance initiatives, and leverage technology to improve efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of public services.

7. *Strengthening social welfare programs*: To address concerns about poverty and inequality, the administration should strengthen social welfare programs. This can include expanding access to

education, healthcare, and social protection programs, as well as implementing targeted poverty reduction initiatives.

The third recommendation is to bolster collaborative and cross-sectoral leadership. This can be achieved through the following steps:

8. *Strengthening collaborative stakeholder engagement and open governance*: Engaging stakeholders, including the business community, civil society organizations, and citizens, is essential for effective governance. The administration should actively seek input and feedback from different stakeholders, involve them in decision-making processes, and ensure their participation in policy formulation and implementation.

9. *Prioritizing social cohesion and peacebuilding*: Promoting social cohesion and peacebuilding efforts is essential to national stability and development. The administration should prioritize initiatives that address social divisions, promote inclusivity, and foster dialogue and reconciliation among different sectors of society.

10. *Promoting economic and maritime security in the West Philippine Sea and defending territorial integrity*: Altogether, the aforesaid recommendations redound to the intersectionality of economic security that entails economic, sustainable, security, maritime, and inclusive development for Filipinos. Further, the Marcos Jr. administration should continue to solidify its stand and take proactive actions to continually defend our exclusive economic zone in the West Philippine Sea and expand international and regional alliances and treaties with like-minded states.

“ THE DECISIVE PURSUIT OF NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ENTAILS THE CONTINUAL PURSUIT OF NATIONAL PROSPERITY, MORE EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, AND BOLSTERING COLLABORATIVE AND CROSS-SECTORAL LEADERSHIP

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CONCLUSION

Treading into its third year and beyond, the Marcos Jr. administration must consider the importance of promoting good governance and economic development in the Philippines through strategic initiatives and policies.

While encouraging trade and investment through strategic initiatives is crucial for economic and political development success, critical elements such as stable policies, competent governance, efficient legal execution, and enhanced ease of doing business is essential for achieving economic goals should be prioritized.

In optimizing the Philippine economy, creating a favorable environment for both domestic and foreign investors is imperative. As caveat, good governance is the key factor that distinguishes a robust, forward-growing economy from a laggard one. Upholding the rule of law, supporting democratic values and economic freedom, and striving for cooperative leadership are vital for good political and economic governance. Transparency, accountability, and sustainable development should always be integrated into the operations of the current administration.

Further, developing timely, appropriate, and transparent policies and effectively implementing them is crucial for drawing in foreign direct investments, creating jobs, increasing retail sales, and fostering external commerce. Addressing enduring issues like bureaucratic red tape and corruption is necessary to ensure the effectiveness and durability of programs promoting PPPs and strategic investments.

Coordinated efforts and practical solutions are needed to overcome obstacles to economic development in the Philippines. Multi-stakeholder engagement is essential to providing an inclusive platform for stakeholders and decision-makers to convene and engage in discourse.

Economic and political development will hinge on promoting trade and investment through strategic measures. Achieving these objectives requires prioritizing key factors like stable policies, effective governance, efficient legal processes, and improved business conditions. It is crucial to establish a conducive environment for both local and foreign investors to unlock the full potential of the Philippine economy.

The linchpin is exceptional governance and the Philippines’ economic progress has long been hindered by such challenge, necessitating concerted efforts and practical solutions for resolution. Increased investor participation can boost tax revenues without the need for tax hikes, as new avenues for business expansion naturally enhance tax income. Advocating for effective governance and open markets should be backed by factual evidence and statistics, with multi-stakeholder engagement serving as a vital inclusive platform for stakeholders and decision-makers to collaborate and exchange ideas. Overcoming challenges and capitalizing on opportunities for governance and developmental reforms demands a holistic and coordinated approach.

Picture Credits:

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ENDNOTES

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