

**Press Briefing by Secretary Martin Andanar of the Presidential Communications Operations Office
with Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque and Executive Director Mary Mitzi Cajayon-Uy of
Department of Social Welfare and Development Council for the Welfare of Children**

[Malacañan Press Briefing Room, New Executive Building, Malacañan Palace | 02 November 2017]

OPENING STATEMENTS:

SEC. ANDANAR: Good morning po. Good morning, good morning. Bago ang lahat, meron akong babasahin. And then I will proceed to introduce our new Spokesperson.

The Philippines dropped to fifth from fourth place last year in the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) 10th Annual Global Impunity Index.

According to the 2017 CPJ Impunity Index progress, the Philippines dropped one place in the index from last year.

In October 2016, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte formed the Presidential Task Force on Media Security (PTFOMS), which includes a designated team of investigators and prosecutors for the speedy probe of new cases of media killings.

The PTFOMS counts three cases under Administrative Order No. 1. The bulk of journalist killings sighted in the CPJ report are comprised of the victims of the 2009 Maguindanao massacre.

The Impunity Index is published to mark the International Day to end impunity for crimes against journalists on November 2, as declared by the United Nations General Assembly, to be observed each year.

It calculates the number of unsolved murders over a 10-year period as percentage of each country's population.

This year, CPJ analyzed journalist murders in every nation that took place between September 1, 2007 and August 31, 2017. Only those nations with five or more unsolved cases for the period are included on the index; a threshold that 12 countries met this year compared with 13 last year.

In the first State of the Nation Address in 2016, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte emphatically stated this government does not condone violence and repression of media. That is why, on October 11, 2016, he signed his first Administrative Order, AO No. 1, creating the Presidential Task Force on Media Security, with its mandate to protect the life, liberty and security of media workers and their families.

The PTFOMS is constantly monitoring, following up and providing legal assistance as necessary to family members of victims of media violence. With the enumerable contributions of our PTFOMS, partners in media security or member-agencies, and media observers, the Philippines jumped from number 138 in 2016 to 127 in the 2017 World Press Index released by Reporters without Borders.

If there are questions regarding this report, I have Undersecretary Joel Egco to answer your questions. But in the meantime, let's move forward. I will introduce to you our new Presidential Spokesperson.

Secretary Harry J. Roque, Jr. is the incoming Presidential Spokesperson and the newest member of the President's Cabinet. Prior to his designation to this new post, Secretary Roque served as Representative of Kabayan Party list in the 17th Congress.

Attorney Roque was one of the founders of the Center for International Law or Centerlaw and represented many victims of human rights in different high-profile cases, including the family of murdered environmental advocate and mediaman Gerry Ortega of Palawan.

He is a media defender, a Maguindanao massacre lawyer and the only Asian admitted to the International Criminal Court. He views criminal libel as contrary to freedom of expression. He won the first ever granted Petition for the Writ of Amparo in favor of a journalist.

Presidential Spokesperson Roque graduated from the University of Michigan Ann Arbor with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and Political Science. He finished his Bachelor of Laws at the University of the Philippines and received his Master of Laws with Merit from the London School of Economics.

Members of the press, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque.[applause]

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Thank you, Secretary Andanar. It's a pleasure to be working with all of you.

As you have heard in my background, I'm a firm believer in freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

I thought I would not be as good a spokesperson as others who were members of the media. But I realized that my working relationship with the media, having defended many of you for libel and having prosecuted cases involving members of the media, should help me in this new undertaking.

I assume this obligation cognizant of the importance of the free marketplace of ideas and I assume this obligation recognizing that the people do have a right to information on matters that affect them.

So it is a pleasure to enter this office of the Office of the Presidential Spokesperson and I look forward to a healthy, exciting, and fun working relationship with members of the Malacañang Press Corps.

For today, I ask all of you, please be very gentle. [laughter]

I think I could take some questions, if you have any.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Pia Ranada (Rappler): Good morning, sir.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Hi.

Ms. Ranada: Sir, just a few questions. The President referred to you as his Secretary. So does this mean, sir, that you will --- is it going to happen that you will have a separate office from the PCOO? It will be an OPS distinct from the PCOO?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I believe it will be an independent office. I was given a Cabinet rank.

But of course, needless to say, I will be working very closely with Secretary Andanar and the PCOO.

Ms. Ranada: All right tapos, sir, you also gave hints in previous interviews that the President may have also offered you another position. Is --- could you maybe give us some details about that position?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I think I would rather wait until the President issues my formal appointment papers.

Ms. Ranada: Sir, can you give us a clue? Sir, is it an adviser position or...?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: It's just an advisory position that would not be incompatible with the Cabinet appointment.

Ms. Ranada: All right. Last question from me. Sir, in the previous days, you were giving interviews. And you mentioned, especially dun sa interview with Asec. Mocha Uson, you have threats against critics, you said that you would throw hollow blocks at them. And then you also said you wouldn't curse but you would scream at critics. Sir, I just wanna ask, does this manner of speaking have a place in the administration given that the admin not only represents Duterte supporters, but all law-abiding citizens, regardless of political leaning?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, let me be very clear. I was addressing Mocha Uson's 5.5 million followers.

And of course, that's a public forum 'no? But the message I wanted to send to the DDS was I have the back of the President covered.

Now, you can take it literally or figuratively. But what I meant was, since I believe in the free marketplace of ideas, stones hurled are welcomed, but expect to have bigger stones thrown back at you. I think that's the nature of the free marketplace of ideas.

It is only where we have clash of ideas that we are able to discern what the truth is and what is [not?].

Ms. Ranada: But sir, do you think that, given that the government is at a powerful position compared to citizens, that this kind of language might actually create a threaten --- threatening environment, which is actually going to compromise the free marketplace of ideas that you said want to espouse?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: With all due respect, I don't think the DDS supporters, whom I was addressing, had that in mind.

But for purposes of the mainstream media, I could assure you that my track record speaks for itself.

I am for free exchange of ideas and I welcome opposing and conflicting views, as healthy and important in the democracy.

Ms. Ranada: Thank you, sir.

Vic Somintac (DZEC): Secretary Roque, good morning.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Good morning, sir.

Mr. Somintac: Just for the record, may we know if there is any marching order from the President as the new Presidential Spokesman?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Only two things 'no: Think for what is right for the country and never lie. So do what is right and tell the truth. Two orders.

You're becoming very gentle. [laughter] I can be --- I can [inaudible] that we'll be wrapping up.

Rose Novenario (Hataw): Hi, good morning, sir. Sir, may ano po, may sumusulpot ngayon o may napaulat na anomalya po sa Social Security System involving stock market manipulation. Meron na po bang ulat sa Malacañang si President Dooc or Chairman Amado Valdez tungkol dito, given po na noon pong panahon ng Estrada regime ay napasama po sa plunder trial ni Mr. Estrada 'yun pong paggamit ng SSS funds para pa bumili ng stocks sa BW Resources. Ano pong masasabin niyo rito?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Lilinawin ko po ang isiniwalat ni Chairman 'no --- si Chairman Dean --- na nangyari sa SEC is insider trading.

Wala pong anomalya na nag-impluwensya ang mga empleyado para bumili ng one stock. They benefited from insider information.

And as you know, it was the Chairman himself who made this public. So it shows that the SSS, in line with the administration's goal of eradicating corruption, will not tolerate foul play, particularly in the management of the SSS funds. I think that was very clear.

Ms. Novenario: So, ano po 'yung stand --- stance po ng Malacañang dito sa 'di umano'y pagkakasangkot nung actuary chief at nung isa pang opisyal po ng SSS sa --- ayon na rin po kay Mr. Valdez?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Chairman Valdez has ordered an investigation. There will be prosecutions, there will be people who will be fired and criminal charges filed, if warranted.

Thank you.

Dexter Ganibe (DZMM): Hi, Sec. Good morning. Sec., madalas natin mapakinggan kay Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte, kanyang panawagan, lalo na sa ilalim ng Executive branch, na live a modest life at gumamit ng mga sasakyan na hindi din nama--- hindi naman masyado --- magagara pero hindi 'yung mga mahalina. Are you willing to comply or sumunod dun sa ganung panawagan ng Pangulo?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: 'Yung aking magandang kotse po is five years old. Ibig sabihin, hindi na ako pupwede bumili ng bago. So, maluluma na po sa akin 'yung maganda kong kotse.[laughs]

I understand the --- the s--- the vehicle to be assigned to a Cabinet Secretary is an Innova. So I said, "Sure, I will use an Innova."

Mr. Ganibe: So hindi niyo na gagamitin 'yung BMW?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, I would say that because there's a free car. Why not use the free car? Five-year-old car, I will save it from further depreciation. [laughs]

Deo De Guzman (RMN-DZXL): Good morning, sir. Nandito po ako.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Yes, sir.

Mr. de Guzman: Can you react po? Kasi sinabi po ni Senator Antonio Trillanes na ano daw po bang nangyari, parang nasapian din daw po kayo ng masamang espiritu?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I think that's in line with Halloween. So let's leave it at that.[laughter]

Celerina Monte (Manila Shimbun): Good morning, sir. Celerina Monte from the Daily Manila Shimbun, Japanese newspaper. Sir, there's this new report by the World Bank regarding ease of doing business, wherein the Philippines dropped by 14 notches on its rank. While there's this improvement on the scores, however, other countries improved much. That's why we slipped in the rank. May we know what's the government action in order to recover our rank to improve our status?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, Secretary Lopez mentioned this actually in Japan 'no. But he did say that although we fell in the rankings, that our scores improved.

Unfortunately, we were compared to a list of only about 30 countries and not all countries in general.

He assured me that if the comparison is made with all other countries, there would have been an improvement. Nonetheless, we will take this report very seriously and I think the President has shown a political will 'no to get things done and I'm sure that this report will be a reason for us to further innovate and make sure that doing business in the Philippines will become easier.

Ms. Monte: Do we have any target? Like before, the Aquino administration has its own target, but it failed to reach that target. So do you have any target as to the rank?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: No. But with the President in November next year, he would want to see an improvement in the rankings.

Ms. Monte: But what specific like at this level?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Right now, there's none. I still have to confer with Secretary Lopez 'no. But I am sure, the President, in November of next year, would want to see a substantial improvement regardless of whatever reasons the Department may have to justify 'no the standing of the Philippines.

I assure you. Things will move in DTI to make it easier for individuals to invest.

Llanesca Panti (Manila Times): Hi sir, good morning po. Llanesca Panti of Manila Times. I covered you in the House po.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I know. Nandito ka na pala. Mabuti naman may familiar face. Pwede bang magdala ka pa mas marami? Yes, ma'am?

Ms. Panti: Sir, I would just like to clarify about the Marawi siege. Because the President already declared Marawi liberated from terrorists and yet, over the weekend, there was an Indonesian who was arrested, a Maute fighter. And he said and the Army confirmed this today that there are still 39 Maute fighters in the area. So I'm just trying to reconcile if it is liberated, why are there --- why is it that there are still 39 Maute fighters at large?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I think that's easy to explain. It's the nature of urban street warfare. There is no open shooting in Marawi now.

I don't think they have the capability to engage us frontally but they may still be in hiding and that is why the military continues to exercise caution.

That's also the reason why we have not allowed civilians completely to return to the war zone area.

Ms. Panti: Sir, it's... What is it? What is the situation? Is it safe to return in --- for the evacuees to return to their homes or just in parts of Marawi?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I think, there were parts ---

Ms. Panti: How will we describe the situation now?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, you see, my plan is on this Wednesday, I will conduct a press briefing in Marawi itself because I would want to be informed about what's really happening.

If you recall, I've had two trips to Marawi. One is to distribute relief goods to the bakwits because I was the author of the IDP Bill, rights of internally displaced persons; and another to provide burgers and other materials for the soldiers 'no.

This Wednesday, I've asked actually the PCOO to arrange a Wednesday briefing because I understand, the Malacañang Press Corps does not want a briefing on Wednesdays.

So in fact, I'm planning on doing briefings regularly on Wednesdays from the ground in Marawi. I could probably give you better answers when I get there.

Ms. Panti: Thank you, sir.

Rose Coz (UNTV): Hi sir, good morning po.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Hi.

Ms. Coz: Sir, hingin po namin ang Palace statement regarding sa ipinahayag po ni DDB chair --- Dangerous Drugs Board chair Dionisio Santiago na mistake po 'yung construction ng mega rehab sa Nueva Ecija dahil malaki 'yung naigugol at hindi naman po ganun nagagamit 'yung 10,000 bed capacity. Mas maganda daw po na mag-construct ng mga community-based rehab centers.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, alam niyo po, wala pong pera ng gobyerno na ginastos diyan sa mega rehab centers na itinayo 'no. 'Yan po ay ibinigay ng isang philanthropist na Tsino 'no.

So bagamat ganyang po ang opinion ng pinuno ng Dangerous Drugs Board, eh ang assurance naman po natin, walang nasayang na pondo ng gobyerno.

That was a decision made by the donor and we can't do anything about it. But we will certainly consider what the expert has said and in the future, if we are to invest public funds, we will pursue the strategy recommended by the head of the DDB.

Ms. Coz: Samantalain ko na rin po. Reaction din po ng Malacañang regarding po doon sa kabubuo lang po na grupo na Manlaban sa Extrajudicial Killings na binubuo po ng mga lawyers, law professors, judges at law students?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: We welcome that 'no because you see under our existing laws, not just in the Philippines but worldwide, there is not one legal system in the world that does not recognize the principle of presumption of regularity in the discharge of official functions 'no.

The only way by which we can overcome this presumption is if there is controverting evidence.

So kung may ebidensya that the presumption should not apply, the presumption will not be applied.

And I welcome this development because unless we can come up with actual evidence na merong extra-legal killings talaga, then we cannot overcome the presumption.

But as far as extra-legal killings is concerned, I came to this job knowing fully well the official position of the President, which he made public after the killing of Kian 'no.

He will not tolerate murders. He will only tolerate killings when it is in line with duty and when the engagement is legal and he had, in fact, asked that the police officers involved in the Kian killing be arrested by General Bato.

JP Bencito (Manila Standard): Hi Secretary, good morning. Sir, JP Bencito, Manila Standard. Sir, can we get your reaction on the third quarter Social Weather Stations survey. Sir, it says that 46 percent of Filipinos and 35 percent disagreed that it cannot be avoided that there are innocent civilians who will die in order to eradicate the drug problem ---

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Ano ho uli 'yung figure? I'm sorry.

Mr. Bencito: Forty-six percent agree and 35 percent disagree that it cannot be avoided that there are civilians who will die in order to completely eradicate the drug problem.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: So it's almost split in the middle 'no?

Mr. Bencito: Yes sir. Does the Palace agree to this survey? What are your thoughts on this, sir?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, in any war, unfortunately, there will be collateral damage. The goal of the government is to minimize the collateral damage. The goal of the government is to uphold the right to life 'no, which is to protect and promote the right to life.

As far as this obligation is concerned, there is a continuing obligation of the state to investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of these killings.

And that is why earlier, I said, I welcome the creation of that group of lawyers because we need the help of civil society in overcoming the presumption of regularity in the discharge of functions.

Mr. Bencito: Sir, pahabol na lang din po.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Opo.

Mr. Bencito: On another topic. Sir, can we just get an outlook of how does --- how do you view the trip of the President to Japan since you were part of the delegation, sir?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Very successful 'no. We came home with 6 billion worth of investments; we came home with the promise to build a subway and I'm most excited about a subway because that's really the solution to the traffic problem.

I'm happy that we're building a 2 billion liquefied natural gas facility somewhere in the south. LNG is an alternative energy source that is clean and that is cheap compared to regular petroleum.

There's 40 patrol vessels that would be used to improve our maritime capability. And most important --- most important, there's the currency swap, which makes now the peso freely convertible to yen.

Dati-rati po kasi, kinakailangan palitan muna sa dolyar. Eh maraming nawawala pong salapi sa OFW kapag kada magpapadala sila in peso, eh iko-convert muna sa dollars. So it was a hugely successful trip. Proof that the pivot to Asia has been paying off.

Dharel Placido (ABS-CBN News Online): Hi sir, good morning.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Hi, sir.

Mr. Placido: I'm Dharel Placido from ABS-CBN News. Sir, may we ask for a Palace reaction on the decision of Dole Japan to recall 9,000 bunches of Philippine bananas, especially in light of the Philippines' request to lower tariffs? Sir, kasi may nahanap po na wires doon sa isa sa mga bananas. So how do we allay concerns from the Japanese regarding the quality of our bananas?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: If I'm not mistaken, the Philippines is probably the biggest supplier of bananas to Japan. It's unfortunate that this shipment, this incident happened.

It's not too big, the shipment is not too big. I don't think it will affect our current status as the biggest, if not one of the biggest suppliers of the food product into Japan. I think it was just an accident.

Mr. Placido: Sir, one more question from my part. Sir ---

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: And take note ha, this is not a phytosanitary concern. Kasi ang delikado diyan, when countries impose non-tariff barriers, they impose what is known as phytosanitary.

Kunwari, sinasabi nila, there's a threat to health 'no and some countries are notorious for barring agricultural products on this basis 'no.

But that was not the reason invoked by Japan. So I don't think there's too much of a reason to worry.

Mr. Placido: Sir, another question. Sir, you served as the legal counsel of Malaya Lolas, I understand.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Yes.

Mr. Placido: So, sir, how does this --- how does you being accepted into --- as the Presidential Spokesperson affect your advocacy in seeking wartime rape redress, sir?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: It hasn't affected it at all in the sense that the advocacy is continued by Centerlaw, which is an organization that I founded.

But I seized to be connected with Centerlaw when I joined government as a member of Congress. Because the nature of civil society is that it is divorced from government.

So I'm happy to say that I founded that organization, that they continue with the mandate, and they will continue even without me.

Mr. Placido: Thank you, sir.

Maricel Halili (TV-5): Hi sir, good morning. Sir...

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Yes, yes, hi.

Ms. Halili: Hello po. Sir, just a few clarification. I think you mentioned in one of your interviews that you're planning to hire or there is a need for a Deputy Spokesperson. May we know if you have someone in mind who might be your Deputy Spokesperson? And what will be your criteria in choosing, sir?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, number one, I want a millennial. Number two, I want someone better looking like --- than me so that the women will fall in love with him. And I want someone who speaks better than me.

I promise the women, you will like the person I have in mind.

Ms. Halili: Sir, why is there a need for a Deputy Spokesperson?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Only because I may not be here all the time.

I do want to spend a lot of time in Marawi. I will be there on Wednesdays because you don't want to have me around on Wednesdays so I will go and meet the provincial press corps on Wednesdays.

So but, there's always someone who should be able to give the Palace position on different issues and I think I'm choosing this person because I want a link between a 72-year-old President and the millennials of today. You will not be disappointed with my choice.

Ms. Halili: Sir, just a clarification. Hindi kami 'yung ayaw na mag-press con ng Wednesday ah. Gusto ka namin nandito. Hindi kami 'yun. But anyway, sir ---

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: But you know, forgive me, but it's an innovation that I thought of because the rebuilding is soon to begin and I think the people should know exactly what's happening on the ground.

That's why it's going to be very difficult for me to be flying to Marawi every Tuesday evening. It's a very long drive from Cagayan de Oro. It's very complicated for security reasons and logistic reasons but I want to do that because I want to bring Malacañang to areas where, you know, attention should be devoted 'no.

Ms. Halili: Sir, may we know kung sino po 'yun kino-consider niyo na possible maging Deputy Spox?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: A former student of mine. He can't report yet because he's taking the Bar. He doesn't know yet but I'm sure I will be able to persuade him. Magugulo 'yung kanyang Bar review so guguluhin ko siya.

Ms. Halili: Sir, last question na lang po. What particular changes should we expect from OPS?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, I've said it again. I'm a lawyer, I'm a litigator so I guess the approach is different.

I always will speak from a legal perspective and believe it or not, one reason why we call lawyering as a fraternity of sorts is it's inculcated in our mind that we have to perform and discharge our obligation pursuant to the Constitution and pursuant to law.

So that's a major difference. All pronouncements will be said within the proper legal context.

Ms. Halili: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Guzman: Sir, one question lang. Related, sir, doon sa paghiwalay ng OPS doon sa PCOO. Magkakaroon po ba kayo ng restructuring doon sa tao ng PCOO? Would you retain those people, 'yun pong mga official ng OPS na mahahawak --- mga under ni Undersecretary Abella?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I'm not going to reinvent the wheel 'no dahil nariryan na 'yung karamihan sa kanila. I'm sure they can stay.

And I will repeat what I have said: No one will lose their jobs because it's Christmas. If there will be individuals that will be let go, we will wait until after Christmas and as I said, I would want to take advantage of the experience of people who are already here.

But please understand that as a Cabinet post, I also need to bring in people whom I can completely trust. And that's the only reason why I'm bringing in new personalities.

Mr. de Guzman: Thank you, sir.

Ted Tuvera (Daily Tribune): Good morning, Secretary.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Yes, sir?

Mr. Tuvera: Secretary, you're known to be an international law expert. And now as Presidential Spokesperson, how would you explain President Duterte's frequent tirades against the European Union, the United Nations and the United States?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, it's part of international relations 'no. When the President complains about certain acts of sovereign states, he does so with a reason 'no.

In the case of the European Union, he felt that there was a violation of the UN Charter, specifically the principle of non-interference 'no because the drug war is a sovereign undertaking and it is a sovereign undertaking 'no.

So it's only understandable that the President expressed displeasure where he feels that this tenet of non-interference is being violated by other countries.

Mr. Tuvera: But do you think that it is necessary to curse them, Secretary?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I think people should get used to the President by now and they must be used to the President after almost a year and a half.

Mr. Tuvera: Secretary, on another issue. You were quoted as saying in a report over the weekend that you want to advise the President that's why you entered the Cabinet. What would you advise him on the issue of human rights given that he has this negative reputation in terms of human rights before the international community?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, as I said 'no, primary difference between me and other spokespersons is I'm not just a lawyer, I was a practicing lawyer and very active practitioner at that.

Now, the President is no different. He practiced Criminal Law. He was a public prosecutor. And it's a matter really of making the President realize that Criminal Law is actually a manner of enforcing human rights.

Because when you prosecute a case of murder, you do so because a murderer violated the right to life. That kind of an advice, I think 'no would be appropriate, that there is no incompatibility between his public policies, his directives and human rights itself.

Ms. Novenario: Good morning uli, sir.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Hi, again.

Ms. Novenario: Ano po 'yung statement ng Palasyo tungkol po dun sa New York City attack po kahapon? 'Yung lone wolf attack po ng isang truck driver?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I saw the statement from the Palace. There was a statement issued.

We, of course, express our condolence to the victims and we have advised the Filipinos in New York to inform the closest consulate if there are any Filipino casualties.

But beyond that, you know, this attack proves that terrorism is really a worldwide problem. It's also, I think, attributed to the same terrorist group that is responsible for Marawi.

So this, again, proves that the issue of terrorism had ceased to be a domestic issue, that there is a need for concerted action among states in dealing with the menace of modern day terrorism.

Ms. Novenario: Sir, ano po 'yung maipapayo natin sa publiko na para po maiwasan 'yung ganitong klaseng pag-atake sa Pilipinas? Dahil po sa America, 'yung US Transportation and Security Agency, nagbigay po sila ng babala sa mga truck owners or 'yung vehicle owners po na maging mapanuri po sa, halimbawa po sa paga-upgrade po ng mga sasakyang malalaki at 'yung pagpapaarkila po sa mga taong hindi po nagbibigay ng kanilang background. So papano po ito pwedeng mai-apply po rito sa Pilipinas?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, alam niyo po kinakailangan maging mapagmasid ang ating mga taumbayan.

Kung meron kayong nakikita na kahina-hinalang mga pakete na naiiwan sa mga lugar na pampubliko, ipagbigay-alam po natin kaagad sa ating mga awtoridad 'no.

I think this is a kind of awareness that we need to develop as a people. When I was a student in the UK, that kind of awareness was prevalent amongst the British public 'no.

So the same kind of vigilance is required amongst all Filipinos now 'no. Let's be vigilant, let's be observant, and let's not hesitate to inform the authorities in case we believe there is a threat coming from anything or anyone.

Bakit si Philip hindi mo tinawag? Ha? Ayaw mong tawagin si Philip 'no? Siyempre tatawagin mo siya dahil pinagpepyestahan ako. Oo, oo.

Ina Andolong (CNN Philippines): Sir.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Yes, ma'am?

Ms. Andolong: Sir, the Food and Drug Administration is expected to issue soon a decision on some questioned contraceptives. Ito po 'yung mga --- ide-declare daw po ito na mga non-abortifacients, in effect, it is expect --- this decision is expected to finally lift the TRO on these contraceptives which has

been preventing the full implementation of the RH Law. Can we get your thoughts on this, especially since in his last SONA the President did talk about this?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Hallelujah is all I could say. Because this should have been done a long time ago. And this is the only thing that the Supreme Court wants anyway so that we can fully implement the RH Law.

As you know, the President is fully committed to enforcing the RH Law. Population management is important to economic growth. And with this development, I see no reason why the Supreme Court will continue with his temporary restraining order.

Ms. Andolong: Sir, in that same SONA, the President said or --- that this batch of contraceptives were about to expire the month after and nautusan rin po niya, he gave a directive to, well now, former Health Secretary Ubial to distribute those contraceptives. May we know the status, natuloy po ba 'yun or did it just go to waste?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Can I invoke a conflict of interest as far as Secretary Ubial is concerned?

But, there's good reasons for that, because I really believe that reproductive health could have been implemented earlier had they ordered the FDA to do this earlier rather than file a motion for reconsideration.

But that, again, is a difference of legal opinion on matter of strategy. But we can see now, that this process that the FDA recently concluded could easily have been done earlier had the DOH pressed the FDA to do so.

Ms. Andolong: So naipamigay po 'yun, sir?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I have no information, I'll find out. Bu you see, as I said, I have a conflict of interest there. So let's ask the incoming secretary.

Ms. Andolong: Okay. And, just on a different topic, sir. I have to ask. How long, sir, do you see yourself serving as spokesman? Because in some of the President's speeches, he would refer to you, although in a joking manner, as a "senator". I was just wondering if is that is a hint of the President, maybe having any plans for 2019 may affect your position as spokesman?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Alam mo itong mga pangyayari na na talaga akong spokesperson, ang motto ko ngayon, "Thy will be done." Sino ba namang akalaing magiging spokesperson ako?

None of you probably expected it, in the same way that I did not expect way. So, in the same way that I do not know what I'll be doing tomorrow, I leave it to the Lord.

Meanwhile, I'll just do the best that I can do with this challenge and this opportunity given. And I hope it will be a fun process with all of you here.

Naku, ayan na si Philip. [laughter]

Buti na lang kaibigan ko si Philip.

Hannah Sancho (SMNI): Sir, before kay...

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: He will be gentle.

Ms. Sancho: Good morning, Secretary. Before kay Philip po. Hannah po of Sonshine Media. Sir, tatanong ko lang sir 'yung regarding dun sa sinabi ni Ambassador Kim na hindi po daw totoo na 'yung CIA may plano pong destabilization plot against kay President Duterte, which is contradict to dun sa sinabi ng Pangulong Duterte. I think may isa ring pong White House official na nag-deny din po nito? Statement po ng Palace, sir?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Well, if that is true, we're happy. But if the President says that there is, I have no position to dispute what the President says.

The President has access to information that he only has access to. I have not seen it. But I trust and believe that my President will not say anything without factual basis. I stand by whatever my President says.

Philip Tubeza (Philippine Daily Inquirer): Sir, good morning.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Hi, Philip. [laughter]

Mr. Tubeza: Sir, may update na po ba kay dating Spokesperson Abella kung saan siya mapupunta?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Wala po akong alam sa totoo lang. Although, minsan ko lang siya nakausap at nagte-text message --- nagte-text po kami para sa transition.

Pero ang problema ko po talaga is... He is a good friend of mine. You know that we belong that we belong to the same church. He is one of our pastors. I think he did a brilliant job as Spokesperson.

I don't think I can ever be as calm as Secretary Abella. And that's why he's a very difficult act to follow. I have asked for his prayers and I will pray for him. But I'm sure there is something in store for Secretary Abella.

Mr. Tubeza: Thank you, sir.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: That was mild.

Ms. Panti: Sir, follow up lang po on two things about Japanese loans as a result of the visit and comfort women. Because President Duterte said last year that he will raise this issue with the Japanese. I'm curious if the issue of comfort women has been raised considering that Japan already agreed to a compensation deal with South Korean comfort women?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I'm almost sure...

Ms. Panti: Our comfort women don't enjoy the same benefits, sir, eh. So has this been discussed on the table or anything on the table concerning our comfort women?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I'm almost sure this was not discussed in the Japan trip. I do not know if the President will bring it up, but in my personal capacity, I will confer with Secretary Alan Cayetano of the secretary --- of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Ms. Panti: Tsaka, sir, second. You are also with the President, during his visit to China po?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Yes.

Ms. Panti: And China also had granted us loans. But I've seen figures, the interest rates of the Japanese, it's like 0.01 to 0.03 or 1.15 percent is the highest as compared with China, as high as six percent. So would you say, the Japanese gave a more generous deal for the Philippines?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: I think the rates will speak for themselves. But the decision on where we will purchase and how much interest we will pay, will really depend on which country will provide the best commodity for us.

So I trust that our authorities will make the correct decisions 'no and let's accord them that presumption.

Oo nga apala 'no. We're not just here to do a press briefing. We're here because it's National Children's Month.

Now, we have a resource person here who is a good friend. She is not only very, very intelligent but also very pleasant to look at.

Mary Mitzi Cajayon-Uy is Executive Director of the Council for the Welfare of Children.

She was a member of Congress in the 14th and 15th Congress and --- representing the 2nd District of Caloocan.

Her committee membership in Congress include the Special Committee on the Welfare of Children and Special Persons, Youth and Sports Development, Committee on Millennium Development Goals, Committee on Women and Gender Equality and Committee on Higher Education.

Further, she also served as Chairperson to the Special Committee on Globalization and the World Trade Organization.

Former Rep. Cajayon and Executive Director Cajayon is the author of the Anti-Bullying Act, the Mandatory Infant and Children Immunization Act, as well as an Act Threatening the Juvenile Justice System.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce and let's give a warm welcome to Executive Director Mitzi Cajayon-Uy.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CAJAYON: Good morning. Good morning. I just want to congratulate Secretary Harry Roque for his new position. A very well deserved post.

And I want to say congratulations to our President for having him, as well, because it was --- ang sarap pakinggan ng mga sagot mo. Ang sarap makinig sa'yo, hindi ka nakakaantok and congratulations.

Thank you to the Malacañang Press, it is a pleasant good morning to all. It is almost my fourth month as Executive Director of the CWC. Quite a transition and a leap from being part of a legislative branch and now as a member of the executive branch.

Transcending from legislative to the executive gave me a lot of realization on the interconnection of our work, especially in advancing the rights and welfare of children.

It is my great pleasure to be with you, as we, the Council for the Welfare of Children celebrates the 25th National Children's Month.

Allow me to please give a brief background of CWC before I discuss the National Children's Month.

The Council for the Welfare of Children is the focal interagency body of the Philippine government for children.

We are an attached agency of DSWD. It was created by virtue of Presidential Decree 603, which is the Child and Youth Act in 1974 and which was amended by EO 233, Series of 1987, which redefined the role --- organizational structure and membership of CWC.

Currently, CWC Board is composed of seven line agencies: DSWD as the Chair, and other agencies being DOJ, DepEd, DOH, DILG, DOLE and Department of Agriculture. And three other coordinating body such as NEDA, NNC or the National Nutrition Council and the CWC Secretariat.

Three private individuals and one of which is a child representative.

To date, our private individuals are still to be filled in as our former board members have finished their terms.

As a focal government interagency body on children's concern, CWC is mandated to:

Coordinate the implementation and enforcement of our all laws relative to the promotion of children's welfare; Formulate and advocate for the com --- for the implementation of policies, programs and projects; Monitor and evaluate policies, programs and measure for children; Advocate for child's right and mobilized resources; Build strong networks, partnerships and coordination mechanisms; And institute building of partners and stakeholders.

We are also known as the coordinating body in the implementation of the provision of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC).

CWC has developed a number of long-term plans and frameworks for children, which aids in planning and policy-making processes such as Child 21, divided into Medium-term Plans or the National Plans of Action for Children.

Child 21 is a long-term development framework, which drives the country's vision for children.

It laid the foundation for a rights-based approach to planning and programming woven across the child's stage and development.

In order to fully realize the Child 21 framework, it was translated into time bound plans in medium-term, multiple year timeframes which is concretize in the national plans of action for children.

Recently, the third National Plan of Action for Children was approved by CWC Board. It has... It is the third and the penultimate multi-sector medium term rights-based and results-oriented action plan that concretize --- that concretizes the strategies, policies and programs for children into an action plan to achieve Child 21's vision for Filipino children by 2025.

The third --- the third NPAC is driven by the country's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its related optional protocols to uphold children's rights. It is made consistent with children-related goals and target of the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 and the commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2030.

It further takes into account the results, significant findings, and unfinished agenda of the second NPAC 2011-2016 which was focused on the Millennium Development Goals set for achievement in 2015.

The third NPAC integrates the salient features of the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition; Philippine Health Agenda; Philippine Program of the Action Against Child Labor; Philippine Plan of Action for the Elimination of the Violence Against Children, among others; and further puts together child-related sector and inter-agency programs and projects --- and those of civil society, organizations, and non-government organization.

And now I will discuss about the NCM celebration. As the National Children's Month celebration, we will be holding it this November.

Republic Act No. 10661 series of 2015 declares every November as the National Children's Month or NCM. A declaration that commemorates the adoption of the Convention of the Rights of the Child by United Nations' General Assembly on November 20, 1989 and seeks to instill its significance in the Filipino consciousness.

And pursuant to the observation of the National Children's Month, an annual program of activities shall be prepared and implemented by the Council for the Welfare of Children, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the National Youth Commission Council as the lead agencies.

At this point, CWC enjoins everyone in its meaningful celebration through the conduct of activities aligned with the theme, "Bata Iligtas sa Droga" in support to the administration's campaign against illegal drugs.

To further campaign for this advocacy, CWC has lined up several activities for this year's NCM celebration.

One of the major activities is launching of Pito, Bata, Pito, A Call For Help or C4H, an initiative of the Council for the Welfare of Children in partnership with the Rotary Club Pasay Cyber City on November 6.

The Pito, Bata, Pito, A Call for Help have the whistle as --- symbolizes the children's call for support, help, and immediate response in times of threat or danger brought about the violence against children or any emergency situation.

Even children with disabilities can use it easily as means of communication when feeling threatened or harmed. It can give security and comfort having one. Right now, school children are taught how to use whistles but I cannot say that it holds through in all schools.

You can see it in ads that they are having go bags or the survival bags that whistles should be included. But then, same whistle can aid or help the children when they need assistance in times of danger or when cannot cry out for help.

The Pito, Bata, Pito Call for Help seeks to give children a voice from being victims of various crimes specifically on illegal drugs and all forms of violence and exploitation. It is okay to blow their whistles or pitos whenever they feel in danger and unsafe.

One of the critical issues we are face in our fight against drug is the children falling as victims of illegal drug activities and other forms of violence in the country. It is in this context that the council sees the need to launch this campaign for children to be equipped in protecting themselves.

It calls the authorities and the citizens to act and engage proactively in working together in protecting and advancing the rights and welfare of children.

This campaign will gather donations from --- for whistles until the end of 2017 in partnership with the Rotary Club as I've mentioned. We'll be aiming for 1 million whistles that will be given to different kids across the nation by Christmas season.

Another major activity is the conduct of the Presidential Award for Child-Friendly Municipalities and Cities which is done annually.

And this is recognition and incentive system which is given to the different municipalities and cities which has garnered the highest rating in different plans, programs, policies and implementation of child-friendly projects in different sectors such as education, health, resource mobilization, policy and planning process and project implementation.

It is also a strategy to advocate and monitor the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in local level.

The awarding ceremony will be here in Malacañan Palace on October 22nd. And there are also other activities that goes along on our Children's Month like Dikit-a-Sticker campaign and the Kids' Festival.

So, I deeply appreciate... I am extending the invitation to all of you and CWC along with the NYC and DSWD have partners for these endeavors. All throughout the month of November, we will having also our regional activities on our extended regional offices.

I deeply appreciate the presence of different stakeholders in our pursuit in achieving the vision of child-friendly Philippines, a caring and proactive society for, by and with children.

This vision is a translation of our commitment to the UNCRC which we share and promote among all sectors and levels of Philippine society.

The celebration of the NCM is just but a one manifestation or we where it is evident that responsive, collaborative, partnerships and linkages are at work.

We hope you can all be with us during the kick-off activity which is on November 6, this coming Monday at San Francisco High School at Misamis Street, Bagong Bantay, Quezon City. This is beside SM Annex.

We look at the media as an important ally in the promotion and protection of children's rights and welfare.

Thank you and good day.

Kris Jose (Remate): Tanong ko lang 'yung age na pagagamitin sa --- age ng mga bata na pwedeng gumamit ng whistle?

MS. CAJAYON-UY: The Council for Welfare of Children is protecting the children who are below 18. So, these children that could already be of age to use the whistle could already do so --- could already use so.

Ms. Jose: Nakipag-coordinate na po ba kayo sa mga baranggay officials para...?

MS. CAJAYON-UY: The information has about to cascade through the LGUs with the help of the Council Board. Nung pinag-usapan po namin ang mga proposal na ito ay inaasahan po namin na ang mga LGUs through DILG will help us cascade this project --- program.

Kristina Mendez (Philippine Star): Good morning po. I am Kristina Mendez from Philippine Star. In line with your program, ano po bang ginagawa ng unit or agency niyo regarding children involved in armed conflict?

MS. CAJAYON-UY: Yes. Ang CWC ay --- having the mandate of EO 10138 na kung saan kami ay tumatayo bilang Chair, kami ay naka --- may mga miyembro na kung saan kinakailangan namin na magbigay ng mga polisiya para sa mga bata in armed conflict especially ngayon na sinusubaybayan namin ang mga bata lalo na sa Marawi na kung saan 'yung mga balita na ang nirerecruit ay ang mga bata bilang combatants.

So, dito inaasahan namin na sa tulong ng mga LGUs at ng mga 'yung partners namin ay mapoprotektahan namin ang mga bata patungkol dito.

And, yes. Nung [inaudible] natin nitong kailan lamang ay nagkaroon kami ng meeting tungkol dito. Malaki sana ang inaasahan naming pagtugon ng gobyerno lalong-lalo na patungkol sa budget kasi gustuhin man namin na magkaroon ng monitoring at 'yung hotline patungkol dito ay hindi pa namin naisasagawa because of lack of budget.

'Yun siguro sa aking leadership na medyo bago pa lamang kasi po ako. Kaya inaasahan namin na iwork out namin ito sa tulong ng mga miyembro, ng mga partners.

Ms. Mendez: Ma'am, on another note. Ano po ang mga programa naman ang nakahanda para sa mga kaso katulad nila Kian de los Santos na below 18 years old, teenagers, na ma-prevent naman silang maging victim of any police operations or caught in crossfire during drug operations?

MS. CAJAYON-UY: Actually, palagay ko ito ay naka --- nasa kaso na, naka ano na. Ang nakakalungkot si Kian ay. Sa amin kasi, sa council, kahit ang isang bata ay sabihin na natin na isang akusado or siya ay maaaring involved sa droga, hindi siya dapat malapatan ng --- he will not be --- until he is proven guilty, hindi siya dapat maakusahan.

Kaya kung kami sa council, kami ay talagang nakatutok dito sa kaso ng Kian. And actually inimitahan namin ang kanyang mga magulang sa November 6 para tumayo bilang pagsuporta dito sa aming mga itinatayong mga programa.

Actually, yeah. I guess, the Juvenile Justice System Council is the one handling this case.

Mr. Ganibe: Magandang tanghali po. Ma'am, with the upcoming ASEAN events, may ano po ba. Ano po ang role ng inyong tanggapan kasi madalas ginagawa ang mga bata sa mga lansangan lalo na po sa mga maapektuhang lugar. May coordination ba with DSWD?

MS. CAJAYON-UY: Pero definitely hindi kami magtatago ng bata. Ah, siguro... [laughter] Kung halimbawa ito ay nagawa noong nakaraang administrasyon, siguro ayaw naman --- ang ating Pangulo, knowing PRRD, ay hindi siya mapagkunwari.

Kung ano 'yung nakikita 'yun ang dapat makita. At kung --- ang sa akin lamang ang mga street children na ito --- the reason why the budget -- the good Senator Loren Legarda had placed huge amount in these activity centers coddling the street children, ito 'yung ginawa niyang pamamaraan para mas masama-sama ang mga bata na nasa kalye.

So, definitely we will place the children in these activity centers where they could have be --- they could play, they could read, and they could be fed on ano.

Mr. Ganibe: During the ASEAN from 13 to 17. Meron silang --- mayroong kayong activities para sa kanila para naman...?

MS. CAJAYON-UY: I guess, we will work hand in hand with the DSWD on this matter.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: Housekeeping lang 'no, housekeeping. Wala naman pong - -- wala --- housekeeping lang ito. Walang pong major pagbabago 'no.

So, I'm subscribed already to your heads up Viber group. So, I'm there already if you need to ask questions. Si Asec. Queenie will continue to be in charge of content. I do have an MRO who I hope you can also tap in bridging 'yung contacts between us. He is [Iko Cepeda?]. He has --- still in Congress but I intend to bring him.

And then, in terms regularity, I proposed actually a Monday good news na I will be strict. It's all good news, okay, [laughter] on Monday.

I do not know if it is feasible, but we'll try. Now, there's a Marawi, Wednesday. But take note too that I think they asked me to report early because of ASEAN.

So, 'yung full implementation of whatever I want to do which is new may have to wait until after ASEAN. But otherwise, business as usual.

Q: The Mindanao Hour will be?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ROQUE: That's still on with Secretary Andanar. I have another innovation --- on Fridays I will be travelling and visiting the local press corps and conducting briefings outside as well.

The Mindanao Hour goes on as usual. Ok? No, on Fridays. I think they will move it now to Friday.

Yes. Tuesdays, I conduct regular press briefings as usual. So it may be Monday, Tuesday, Thursday. But Monday is still tentative kasi I do not if it is workable, if we will have enough materials because it's the weekend.

So, we may have to work on it on Friday for materials for Monday. I'll see, 'no. But definitely, I will attempt to go to Marawi again this coming Wednesday. I'm sure you have your colleagues assigned also in Marawi already.

And then, I'll try to have regular briefing for the provincial press corps. So I'll be travelling on Fridays. Okay?

So, thank you very much ladies and gentlemen of the media. Happy to be here and I look forward to an exciting and fun relationship with all of you.

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