VERBATIM TEXT

REMARKS BY

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PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

AT A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE WITH

HIS EXCELLENCY EMMANUEL MACRON

PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

BANGUNAN SULTAN ABDUL SAMAD, KUALA LUMPUR

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Thank you my dear friend, President Emmanuel Macron, of the Republic of France, and members of the delegation.

What a splendid morning and afternoon, to have not only a President from a very important, great country, who had established extremely close bilateral relations, but more so, as a personal friend and a trusted colleague, who is prepared to share his views, not only on developments in Europe, but also international affairs.

I am of course extremely delighted to have him here. And as you see that how much we place importance to France and to him personally, and of course as President.

Number one, I had to fly back and forth from Manila. It's only because of Macron, otherwise it's not possible. And secondly, to have the first ever bilateral meeting with a head of government here at this Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad for the first time. And I hope this satisfies not only him and the members of the delegation, but this portrays our deep understanding and friendship.

Now with France, of course, after my meeting, prior to that we have had engagements in various forums internationally. And I have consistently expressed my profound appreciation for his stance, in international affairs and how he attentively listened to some of our concerns, and view us as equals, and do not take it for granted but also to listen and reflect on some of these issues and respond, and at times, use that occasion then to reflect back to me through the WhatsApp messages. And therefore I do take it, my dear Emmanuel, very seriously and I have conveyed this to my colleagues in the cabinet, how I value this friendship.

France, is an important country, it's a great history, great civilization, and great literary figures. I mean I can't go on that, but there's a different subject, different forum and I've used it repeatedly, one of the latest of course, is not in the notes and the text. The latest of course, how we should emulate the French culture, tradition, tradition of knowledge and their arts, by just looking at one important incident, during the funeral of the great Victor Hugo. No country in the world, no civilization that I know from my limited understanding, has given that level of reflection and support and love and affection to Victor Hugo.

Millions in the streets of France, to honour this great literary giant. Well, we have many other countries, Leo Tolstoy in Moscow and some others in China, in America, but nowhere can you see. So I ask my students and my colleagues in the Ministry of Education, there's something there. It's not spontaneous. It's something in the culture and the arts and the love of scholarship and literature.

That is one aspect that is not in the program, but to me is important, that I appeal to the President to make sure that we continue that tradition, share and engage with the world. And of course Malaysia is very receptive to these ideas. We have translated in numerous books and titles, from Guy de Maupassant to Montesquieu to Rousseau, and to let our people share, that not only just French, but also this world heritage and intellectual tradition.

Other than that, of course, bilateral relations mechanisms, we have seen this progress in terms of relations, in terms of defence arrangements and agreement, which we will have to proceed. On trade investment, you know, you have seen some of the companies mentioned here, but more so is PETRONAS and TotalEnergies, huge collaboration. I am talking about engaging in major investments and collaborations in various continents, in Asia, in Africa, in America, Canada. PETRONAS and TotalEnergies, as a strong bond and friendship.

Here, Mr. President, we have done something which is unique also on the critical minerals. We do not export raw materials, but with France, we have done so because you are committed to that processing and work with Malaysians as a team. This is important. Countries, for decades, have been independent, and therefore they will have to assert their readiness to collaborate with technology transfer, upskilling, training, so that we benefit and assist one another. And I am very happy that this has proceeded well.

Energy transition is important. I mentioned to the President about the ASEAN Grid. Malaysia becomes the base, critical for energy, and it is expanding well. I mentioned that SoftBank, for example, has this phenomenal investments and projects in France, which was inaugurated by the President himself. And he is trying to use the same template that he had successfully ventured into France to apply it here,

for the benefit of the country, including the base in the Sarawak state. And I would naturally secure his help and assistance to make sure that this can be actualized, and implemented.

And energy also means because we are now proceeding with the ASEAN Grid. ASEAN Energy Grid from Vietnam, undersea cable to North Malaya to Singapore. And then also by land, from Laos. And also one very important project to us is from Sarawak, undersea cable to Peninsular Malaya, into Singapore, and the neighbouring countries. Bongbong Marcos mentioned that he was prepared to take it from Sabah to the Southern Philippines, and President Prabowo has agreed that some of the product from Sarawak goes to Indonesia. So the project is important and we certainly require assistance and support from the French government and industries.

And finally, for the regional stance, I mentioned this very clearly that how much we appreciate the position taken by France, particularly in the issue of Gaza and Palestine. As a voice of conscience, humanitarian concerns, which has been largely ignored, because it's so toxic in terms of deviation. And I used to say that this is, sometimes in a strong-worded language about the ‘hypocrisy’, about talking about human rights and justice, but being very selective. So, the consistent message that you initiated is much appreciated.

On Russia-Ukraine, I mentioned that we have taken a strong stance against the aggression into Ukraine by Russia. We have said it here and also at the United Nations. But we continue to have effective engagement with the Russian leadership.

So. thank you very much again Mr. President, and it's a real, real honour and pleasure to have you and to discuss. I am not saying that as an exaggeration, but it's true, I mean we have engaged with many leaders, we have talked about bilateral relations with many countries, but Emmanuel Macron, you are a great friend.

Merci beaucoup.