

# Statement on deteriorating Philippine-China relations

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## Statement of Concern and Call for Diplomatic Resolution of the Philippine-China Conflict

We are extremely concerned at what appears to be a deteriorating situation between the Philippines and China regarding the dispute over the Spratly Islands and the Scarborough Shoal. China is definitely stepping up its bullying and is now targeting our economic interests – tourism and agricultural produce – to make us accede to their claims. To make matters worse, belligerent protests, attended by flag burning, have erupted in the Philippines, in China, and in other parts of the world, targeting embassies and consulates of the contending countries. These are happening despite both governments' brandishing their commitments to a diplomatic solution.

We demand to know why the diplomatic efforts are not working despite statements by Chinese and Philippine foreign diplomats that they are pursuing the talks and remain in contact with each other. We call on the Aquino government to be transparent about our diplomatic effort and explain to us what's going wrong. We call for open diplomacy so that the whole nation is informed and we can all prepare for better or for worse in this deteriorating situation.

However, we reiterate that a diplomatic solution, rather than belligerent protests, is the best way to protect our national interests in this conflict. We also urge protesters from both sides to stop burning each other's national flags; we do not believe that this kind of nationalist posturing serves the national interests of any nation.

We also note that the Aquino government was following a policy of involving the United States government in the dispute, hoping that the US would back us to the hilt. This was a mistaken strategy. We warned then that the US would ultimately protect only its national interests and not ours. Now the US seems to be backing off from its commitment of support in case we are attacked by a foreign country. Is the deteriorating situation today also the result of this strategy gone wrong?

While we condemn China's bullying, we continue to call for a calm response, i.e., a negotiated, diplomatic solution to the problem. We maintain that an independent foreign policy, especially one that does not pit the US and other foreign powers against our neighbors, will genuinely serve our national interests today and in the years ahead.

To help in moving forward to a peaceful solution to the conflict, the Partido Lakas ng Masa (PLM) is enjoining various peace groups in the country to join us in a peace gathering at the Peace Bell in Quezon City Memorial Park next week. We have deliberately chosen a non-government symbol in order to emphasize the need for a diplomatic and peaceful resolution to the conflict.

**Partido Lakas ng Masa**

