



LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH SERVICE QUICK NOTES

Second Regular Session, 19th Congress

Public Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Relations joint with the Committees on Public Services; and Finance

Chairperson: Sen. Imee R. Marcos

29 April 2024, Monday, 1:00 PM, Senator Recto Room, Senate

Re: A. Philippine Friendship Day Bills -

- 1. S. No. 2120-An Act Declaring Every 26th Day of June Every Year as Philippines-France Friendship Day—Senator Tulfo;**
- 2. S. Nos. 2141 and 2372; and H. No. 7763-An Act Declaring August 9 of Every Year as the Philippines-Israel Friendship Day—Senators Villanueva, Ejercito and Reps. Villanueva, Aumentado, Arenas, et. al.;**
- 3. S. No. 2556-An Act Declaring the 19th of August of Every Year as Special Day for Commemoration of the Philippines-United Arab Emirates (UAE) Friendship Day—Senator Pimentel III;**
- 4. S. No. 2581- An Act Declaring the 3rd Day of March Every Year as a Special Day for the Commemoration of the Philippines-South Korea Friendship Day—Senator Pimentel III;**
- 5. S. No. 2590-An Act Declaring the 22nd of May of Every Year as a Special Day for the Commemoration of the Philippines-Australia Friendship Day—Senator Pimentel III;**
- 6. S. No. 2592-An Act Declaring the 23rd of July of Every Year as a Special Day for the Commemoration of the Philippines-Japan Friendship Day—Senator Pimentel III;**
- 7. S. No. 2599-An Act Declaring the 11th of September of Every Year as a Special Day for the Commemoration of the Philippines-Mongolia Friendship Day—Senator Pimentel III; and**
- 8. S. No. 2600-An Act Declaring the 28th of September as a Special Day for the Commemoration of Philippines-Hungary Friendship Day—Senator Pimentel III.**

B. Good Samaritan at Sea Bills -

- 1. S. No. 1136-An Act Mandating the Duty to Render Assistance at Sea in Accordance with Relevant International Conventions and for Other Purposes—Senator Villanueva; and**
- 2. S. No. 1388- An Act Providing for Rules on the Duty to Render Assistance at Sea in Accordance with Relevant International Conventions to Which the Philippines is a State Party and for Other Purposes—Senator Tolentino.**

Background

A. Friendship Day Bills

It is the policy of the State to pursue an independent foreign policy in its relations with other States. Moreover, the State acknowledges the intrinsic value of its existing bilateral relations with other nations, understanding that these partnerships are built upon historical, cultural, economic, and strategic ties that contribute to the nation's growth and development. As a testament to the significance of these relationships, the State endeavors to commemorate and celebrate them annually, as well as on notable milestones such as the 50th, 75th, and 100th year anniversaries of their establishment.¹

B. Good Samaritan at Sea Bills

The State shall ensure full implementation of ratified maritime instruments, prioritizing safety at sea and upholding obligations as a State Party.² Given the 483 maritime incidents investigated from 2016 to 2020, including 81 deemed "very serious accidents," it is crucial to enact legislation to honor international commitments and ensure timely assistance to those in need.³

Highlights and Significance of the Measures

A. Friendship Day Bills

1. *Ph-France* – This bill seeks to declare every 26th of June of every year as the Philippines-France Friendship Day to commemorate the deep ties between the Philippines and France. Both countries share a profound historical and cultural bond, extending back to before the signing of the Treaty of Amity in 1947. This relationship has been marked by notable interactions, such as Paul Proust de la Gironiere's contribution to establishing the Philippines' first modern farm system in 1819. The 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two nations in

¹ Rephrased from S. No. 2600.

² Rephrased from S. No. 1388.

³ Rephrased from S. No. 1136.

June 2022 underscored their extensive economic and cultural exchanges over the years.⁴

2. *Ph-Israel* – This bill seeks to declare every 9th of August of every year as the Philippines-Israel Friendship Day to commemorate the establishment of the diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Israel. Both countries share historic bilateral relations dating back to 1937 when President Manuel L. Quezon welcomed 1,300 Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust. The "Open Door Policy" demonstrated the Philippines' willingness to assist refugees. Formal diplomatic ties were established in 1957 with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, leading to the opening of embassies in each other's capitals in 1962.⁵
3. *Ph-UAE* – This bill seeks to dedicate August 19th as a special day to honor the long-standing relationship between the Republic of the Philippines and the UAE. Both countries established diplomatic relations on 19 August 1974. Their relationship is based on rich historical, cultural, and economic ties. In fact, the UAE is the Philippines' 17th largest trading partner and the top export market among all Gulf Cooperation Council Member States. Additionally, the UAE is the second home to one of the largest populations of overseas Filipinos in the Middle East.⁶
4. *Ph-South Korea* – This bill seeks to designate March 3rd as a special day to celebrate the long-standing relations between the Republic of the Philippines and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). Both countries established diplomatic relations in 1949. Over the past 75 years, their friendship has expanded from military cooperation to a comprehensive partnership covering political-security, socio-cultural, economic, and developmental aspects. South Korea is a significant trade and investment partner for the Philippines, ranking fourth in bilateral trade with a value of \$15.45 billion in 2022, and fourth in approved investments valued at \$90.62 million according to the Department of Trade and Industry.⁷
5. *Ph-Australia* – This bill seeks to dedicate May 22nd as a special day to honor the long-standing relationship between the Republic of the Philippines and the Commonwealth of Australia. Both countries established formal diplomatic relations on May 22, 1946. Seventy-seven years later, both countries recognize the importance of fostering friendship to promote mutual prosperity, and diplomatic cooperation. Trade between the two countries yielded \$4.1 billion in 2023, with around 40,000 Filipino workers employed by more than 300 Australian companies.⁸
6. *Ph-Japan* – This bill seeks to designate July 23rd as a special day to celebrate the long-standing relations between the Republic of the Philippines and Japan. Both countries established diplomatic ties on July 23, 1956. Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio described the 67-year-old relationship between the two countries as being in a "golden age." Japan stands as the Philippines' top official development assistance (ODA) partner, supporting various projects including infrastructure development, disaster risk management, education, and peace

⁴ Rephrased from the Explanatory Note of S. No. 2129.

⁵ Rephrased from the Explanatory Note of S. No. 2141.

⁶ Paraphrased from the Explanatory Note of S. No. 2556.

⁷ Rephrased from the Explanatory Note of S. No. 2581.

⁸ Rephrased from the Explanatory Note of S. No. 2590.

efforts in Mindanao. Over 80 Japanese employers sought to hire more Filipino workers last year, citing their "excellent work ethic and friendly disposition."⁹

7. *Ph-Mongolia* – This bill seeks to dedicate October 11th as a special day to honor the strong partnership made between the Republic of the Philippines and Mongolia. The bilateral relations between the two countries was established on October 11, 1973, and last year marked their 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties. Mongolia expressed confidence in further strengthening the friendly relations, aiming to enhance cooperation in trade, economy, investments, and people-to-people exchanges. In June 2022, both nations signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Defense Cooperation to develop their defense and military relations in various areas such as policy, education, capacity building, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, defense industry, technology, and other mutually agreed areas.¹⁰
8. *Ph-Hungary* – This bill seeks to designate September 28th as a special day to celebrate the enduring partnership between the Republic of the Philippines and Hungary. Both countries established diplomatic relations on September 28, 1973. Over the years, their ties have developed into a multifaceted partnership covering trade, labor, and more. In 2022, Hungary ranked as the Philippines' 45th trading partner out of 231, with trade values reaching almost US\$190 million. Hungary also stood as the Philippines' 29th export market out of 213 and 60th import source out of 216. Hungary, in turn, relies on foreign workers and professionals, including those from the Philippines. This commitment underscores Hungary's shared aspiration with the Philippines for prosperity and cooperation.¹¹

B. Good Samaritan at Sea Bills

Senate Bill No. 1388, in general, aims to implement provisions in International Maritime instruments ratified by the Philippine Government concerning safety of life at sea and the duty to render assistance to persons in distress at sea to which the Philippines is a State Party to include: (1) The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974 and its Protocols of 1978 and 1988 and Agreement of 1996; and (2) United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982.¹²

Senate Bill No. 1136 seeks the implementation of (1) the UNCLOS, particularly Article 98, on the duty to render assistance, and (2) the relevant provisions of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea.¹³

Under this bill, all vessels, regardless of the Flag State, navigating the territorial sea, archipelagic waters, and internal waters of the Philippines, and all Philippine-flagged vessels navigating in the contiguous zone and exclusive economic zone of the Philippines, and the high seas, shall have the duty to render the necessary assistance to ships in distress or to proceed to the rescue of persons in distress.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Paraphrased from S. No. 2599.

¹¹ Paraphrased from the Explanatory Note of S. No. 2600.

¹² Paraphrased from S. No. 1388.

¹³ Paraphrased from S. No. 1136.

This proposal also provides penalties for the failure to render assistance to distressed ships, when able.¹⁴

Possible Points for Consideration

A. Philippine Friendship Day Bills

1. How many bilateral friendships has the Philippines established among the 195 countries globally?
2. Will these friendships yield more tangible understanding and result to more bilateral or mutual cooperation in various areas of relations such as cultural, education, security, labor, etc.?
3. What areas of cooperation are outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding on Defense Cooperation between the Philippines and Mongolia?
4. How has the partnership between the Philippines and Hungary developed over time, particularly in terms of trade and labor relations?
5. How might the implementation of these measures contribute to improved economic, political, or socio-political relations with the concerned State Parties? Furthermore, what potential implications could arise for countries or territories that may not have favorable relations with these parties?
6. Will these measures create better economic, political, or socio-political relations with the concerned State Parties? What impact will this have on countries or territories that are not in good relations with them?
7. Will there be more advantages in terms of trade, investment, and security if these measures are passed? Are there existing counterpart measures passed or adopted by the concerned State parties?
8. In case there are no existing counterpart measures and in the event the Philippines passed and adopted these Friendship Day Bills, will these concerned State parties likewise pass and adopt counterpart measures?

B. Good Samaritan at Sea Bills

9. What are the primary factors contributing to distress or accidents during sea voyages, and how do they impact maritime safety and security?
10. Can you provide an analysis of the frequency and trends of sea voyage accidents over the past several years, including any notable patterns or changes observed?

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

11. In the aftermath of ship collisions or maritime accidents, what are the typical repercussions experienced by vessels, passengers, and cargoes, and how do these incidents affect maritime operations and safety protocols?
12. Are there existing domestic laws within the concerned State Parties that align with international maritime conventions such as UNCLOS or the International Convention for the SOLAS, and how effectively are they implemented and enforced to ensure compliance and enhance maritime safety standards?