

German President Steinmeier's State Visit Spotlights Deepening Philippine-German Economic Ties at Bilateral Business Briefing



Participants of the 16 June German-Philippine Business Briefing

MAKATI CITY, Philippines — The German-Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (GPCCI/AHK Philippines) convened the German-Philippine Business Roundtable Briefing at Raffles Makati on the evening of 16 June 2026, in conjunction with the State Visit of German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier to the Philippines. The session brought together the German business delegation accompanying the President with senior Philippine government officials and leading German and Philippine private sector representatives to discuss the trajectory of bilateral trade and investment relations.

Steinmeier's visit marks a key moment in the more than seven decades of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Germany. The visit also marks the first state visit by a German President to the Philippines in more than six decades, underscoring its historic significance for both nations. Germany is the Philippines' biggest trading and investment partner within the European Union. The Presidential Communications Office's official readout placed total bilateral trade at about USD 5.5 billion and net foreign direct investments at USD 10.26 million in 2025.

Business Roundtable Briefing Convenes Senior Government and Industry Leaders

The Business Roundtable Briefing brought together the German business delegation accompanying President Steinmeier with senior Philippine government officials and private sector leaders. The session opened with welcoming remarks from Mr. Christopher Zimmer, Executive Director of GPCCI, and a keynote from Mr. Florian Hahn, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office and Head of the Business Delegation, on German-

Philippine bilateral relations and economic cooperation. Delegates then introduced themselves, sharing their company background and business interests in the Philippines.

The Philippine government briefing segment covered three areas: the investment climate and priority sectors for German-Philippine economic cooperation, presented by Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Cristina Aldeguer-Roque; regulatory reform and ease of doing business initiatives, presented by Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) Director General Ernesto V. Perez; and skills and workforce cooperation between the two countries, presented by Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) Undersecretary Felicitas Bay.

The business sector spotlight then turned to the Philippine business environment and opportunities for German companies, presented by Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) President Ferdinand "Perry" Ferrer, followed by a look at the Philippine electronics and semiconductor landscape from Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines Foundation, Inc. (SEIPI) President Dr. Danilo Lachica. An open discussion segment followed, covering bilateral exchanges, investment opportunities, trade facilitation, and sector-specific cooperation between German and Philippine stakeholders.

Government Reaffirms Investment Climate and Reform Momentum



Philippine Government Side led by DTI Secretary Cristina Roque

DTI Secretary Roque reaffirmed the government's readiness to assist German companies looking to invest or expand in the Philippines, citing already-moving expansions as evidence of investor confidence rather than merely stated interest. She positioned the current administration as investment-focused, pointing to ongoing improvements to incentive schemes and visa facilitation for foreign experts, and highlighted President

Marcos' push on trade agreements, noting that he is being positioned as the president with the most free trade agreements concluded. She closed by describing every investment as "music to their ears," signaling a whole-of-government commitment to following through with investors.

"These are not just possibilities or opportunities, these are real investments." says Hon. Cristina A. Roque, Secretary, Department of Trade and Industry "We keep on updating and upgrading our incentive scheme... we take a whole-of-government approach to make sure we get things done"

ARTA Secretary Perez framed the reform agenda around predictability and investor confidence, noting that the Philippines ranks second among Asian economies in the World Bank's 2025 Business B-Ready Report, with implementation, rather than policy design, identified as the remaining gap. He cited concrete improvements in permitting speed, including energy project approvals cut from roughly 300 days to under 60, with mining exploration timelines targeted for a similarly dramatic reduction, alongside the digitalization of business permitting and a strong complaint-resolution track record.

"Investment is an act of trust. A company does not only ask whether a market is growing it also asks: are the rules clear, are permits predictable, are timelines followed?" says Hon. Ernesto V. Perez, Director General, Anti-Red Tape Authority "When we make transactions easier, we do more than improve efficiency... we build trust. And when we build trust, we create the conditions for investments, jobs, innovation, and shared prosperity."

Workforce Cooperation Builds on More Than a Decade of Partnership

Undersecretary Bay highlighted the long-running Philippines-Germany healthcare worker program, in place since 2013 and having placed over 2,500 nurses, with growing interest in extending cooperation to information technology, engineering, and skilled trades, as well as in adapting Germany's dual vocational training model locally.

"The Philippines values Germany not only as a key economic ally, but also as a trusted partner in advancing opportunities for skills development, workforce mobility, and human capital investment." says Hon. Felicitas Bay, Undersecretary, Department of Migrant Workers "Labor mobility can create positive outcomes for both sending and receiving countries when guided by principles of fairness, transparency, skills recognition, and worker protection."

Private Sector Highlights Reforms and Priority Sectors

PCCI President Ferrer framed the Philippines as a young, English-speaking market with a large workforce, pointing to a series of recent reforms easing foreign investment, including 100% foreign ownership now allowed in telecommunications, transport, and power; lower capital requirements for foreign retail; and longer land lease terms. He flagged renewable energy, water infrastructure, digital healthcare, and advanced manufacturing as priority collaboration areas, and extended an invitation to a major business conference in Manila this October.

"The Philippines today offers German enterprises a legislative environment more accommodating than at any point in recent memory." Mr. Ferdinand "Perry" Ferrer, President, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry "We invite German industry to consider the Philippines not merely as a market, but as a long-term partner in shared prosperity."

SEIPI Dr. Lachica emphasized the electronics and semiconductor sector's outsized role in the Philippine economy, accounting for roughly 59% of total Philippine exports, and pointed to a clear opening for deeper

ties with Germany given existing but still modest trade volume between the two countries. He proposed cooperation on advanced manufacturing, workforce development, and green manufacturing.

“As companies seek trusted partners in alternative manufacturing locations, the Philippines stands ready to play a larger role in supporting German and European supply chains.” Dr. Danilo Lachica, President, Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines Foundation, Inc. “Let us continue building stronger bridges between German innovation and Philippine manufacturing excellence.”

German Industry Signals Strategic Interest in Diversification



German delegates led by Mr. Florian Hahn, Minister of State of the German Federal Foreign Office and Head of Business Delegation

Representing German industry, Mr. Wolfgang Niedermark, Member of the Executive Board of the Federation of German Industries (BDI), underscored a strategic need to diversify trade relationships away from overreliance on the United States and China, expressing genuine interest in the Philippines as an underexplored market. Philippine officials responded with assurances on incentives and ease of doing business and visas, noting the dual appeal of the domestic market and the wider ASEAN market.

“We need diversification, and we need to explore markets like yours, which is not new, but where we believe there is a lot of untapped potential.” Mr. Wolfgang Niedermark, Member of the Executive Board, Federation of German Industries (BDI) “We are ready for business.”

A Market That Is Reforming, Opening, and Growing

In his closing remarks, GPCCI Dr. Scheld positioned the Philippines as an actively reforming, opening, and growing market rather than an early-stage one, with priority sectors spanning infrastructure, electronics, renewable energy, healthcare, and agribusiness. He cited the prospective EU-Philippines free trade agreement as a key trade lever ahead for German-Philippine economic cooperation.

“The Philippines is not an emerging market still finding its footing. It is a market that is actively reforming, actively opening, and actively growing.” Dr. Christian Peter Scheld, President, GPCCI “What our colleagues from the Philippine government and private sector shared tonight was not a pitch... it was an accurate picture of where this country stands and what it aims for. The opportunities are documented. The relationships are in this room. The next step is yours.”

About GPCCI

GPCCI / AHK Philippinen belongs to the international network of German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs) which is represented by 150 offices in 93 countries. GPCCI is the official representation of German businesses in the Philippines; a bilateral membership organization with around 300 members; and a service provider to companies in their market entry and expansion.

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