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Kerry: APEC no longer just an economic forum

By RG Cruz, ABS-CBN News
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U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry holds a news conference at the APEC meeting in Beijing. Photo by Nicholas Kamm/Pool/Reuters

BEIJING -- US Secretary of State John Kerry said the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is no longer just an economic forum amid the many challenges confronting the region.

APEC has shied away from political issues for most of its 25 years. But in his remarks at the National Center for Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation luncheon at the Intercontinental Beijing, Kerry said: "When you consider the long list of challenges that we are discussing here at APEC, it's interesting for me to note how APEC itself has been somewhat transformed not just into an economic forum, but frankly, it has also evolved so much and has become such a competent place of discussion of important issues, and it's also [about] security..."

He then noted the many issues affecting its members. "And I think it's fair to say that in today's world, a world with ISIL and Ebola, Ukraine, Syria, climate change, it's impossible not to recognize the relatedness of a lot of the choices that we make economically with the choices that are also... at the same time integrated into a security matrix," he said.

Amid these challenges, Kerry urged APEC countries to also look at them as opportunities

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"Nowhere is the unprecedented set of challenges, but also opportunities more clear than here in Asia and throughout the Asia Pacific. And it is important for people to focus on the fact that even as there are the challenges that I listed, we are staring at a world with absolutely unprecedented opportunity. I think that's part of the attraction in putting so many of the businesses here, not just to APEC, but to the region, and has brought so many more over the last years. We are literally building prosperity and stability in the long term, and that's why, unabashedly, economic policy is at the center of President Obama's rebalance to Asia," he said.

Earlier in the day, Kerry had a light exchange with Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario.

"I'm particularly happy to be here with my good friend and colleague, the Foreign Minister from the Philippines, Albert Del Rosario. Albert, always good to be with you, and thank you very much. Albert said to me he was deathly afraid he was going to be late and he was glad I was the guy who was. Modern diplomacy," he said.

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