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RVN OFFICIAL HOPES FOR EARLY CONVENING OF ASIAN FORUM

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[Text] Manila, March 17 (AFP)--Visiting South Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Phan Quang Dan today expressed hope for an early convening of the proposed Asian forum "if the peace and cooperation of the region is not to be betrayed."

In an interview with the government television here, Quang Dan said the forum, which was proposed by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, could be a potent source of Asia's collective voice in making the region a zone of peace.

"Now is the time to convene such a body to bring together the signatories of the Paris agreement if the peace and cooperation of the region is not to be betrayed," the deputy premier stressed.

Quang Dan said: "Peace in Southeast Asia depends very much on a balance of power and respect of international agreements... If the balance of power is disturbed, the whole region will have to go to unrest and instability."

"Therefore, I think that the idea of the Republic of the Philippines should now be implemented... it is high time that some kind of forum should immediately be convened," he added.

Questioned on the role of the United States in Southeast Asia, the South Vietnamese leader said Washington's honor and credibility "is deeply committed and at stake here."

"However, the Asian nations have a role to play," he added. "It is their right... when the house of your neighbor burns, it is your concern also... much more than people who live miles away. Therefore, I think Asian nations could do much."