

SPEECH OF AMBASSADOR KAZUhide ISHIKAWA

**TESDA Women's Center in Taguig City
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Magandang umaga po. Good morning. Ohayo gozaimasu.

Before making my short statement, I would like to say a few words because I was in Tokyo last week with your President Rodrigo Duterte in his first official visit to Tokyo. The President was welcomed everywhere, very, very much. Not only by the Japanese but also by the huge Filipino community in Japan. Because of his visit, the friendship between the two countries was elevated to a much, much higher place. Now that so many Japanese are very, very much interested in the Philippines and the Filipino people. So it is very, very fortunate for you to come and stay in Japan at this juncture. So, mabuhay to everyone.

It is my great pleasure to be with you at the opening ceremony of this program for the JPEPA nurse and careworker candidates this morning.

First of all, I would like to congratulate our 9th batch of kangoshi and kaigofukushihi candidates on passing the selection and matching process.

I am very happy to see the development of this program since its implementation in 2009. In fact, the number of demands for the 9th batch has dramatically increased and has almost reached 600. We were not able to accommodate all aspirants due to financial constraints, but it is notable that the demand for Filipino nurses and careworkers in Japan is surely growing year by year. Last January, you may recall Their Majesties, the Emperor and the Empress of Japan, visited the Philippines. And their Majesties are very much interested in this program and actually came here at TESDA to observe a Japanese language lesson for batch 8.

I know that you all have the knowledge and skills to be great nurses and careworkers, however, you cannot work well without the ability to communicate with your patients and colleagues. To be successful in this new endeavor will require you to elevate your Japanese language proficiency. Not only will it determine your chances of passing the Japanese national examination, but it will also make a huge impact on your overall experiences in Japan. The more you learn the language, the more fruitful your life will be. So please make the best use of this opportunity to learn the language intensively for your success.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my gratitude for everyone who is behind this program, most especially for our friends at DOLE, POEA, TESDA, Japan Foundation, Nihongo Center Foundation, and PAD Foundation. I commend all of you for your hard work in contributing to the success of this program for nurses and careworkers. With the new chiefs of the Philippine government agencies, we would like to continue our effort for the further improvement of this program.

To our candidates, I wish you all the best of luck and please enjoy your stay in Japan.

Maraming salamat po.