

**Remarks
by H.E. Kazuhide Ishikawa**

**Ambassador of Japan to the Philippines
On the occasion of the 83rd Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan
07 December 2016**

Former President of the Republic of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo,

Former Prime Minister, Cesar Virata,

Senate President Pro-Tempore, Franklin Drilon,

Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Giuseppe Pinto,

Secretary of Finance, Carlos Dominguez III,

Honorable Members of House of Representatives,

Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Ariel Abadilla,

Excellencies, Colleagues of the Diplomatic Corps,

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good evening to all of you and thank you for celebrating with us the 83rd birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

This year marks the 60th Anniversary of Japan-Philippines diplomatic relations. The year kicked off in January with the historic State Visit of their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan to the Philippines. Their Majesties were warmly welcomed by the Filipino people and the visit was a great success in promoting friendship between our countries.

With this heightened sense of goodwill, I am delighted to be able to celebrate the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan with you as one of the culminating events in our year-long friendship celebration.

Following the visit of Their Majesties, active high-level mutual visits have been conducted. Soon after coming into office, President Duterte met with Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida in Davao in August. Then, the President had his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Abe in Laos in September.

Moreover, the President visited Japan this past October for the first time as the nation's leader upon the invitation of Prime Minister Abe. I myself witnessed the meeting between Prime Minister Abe and the President was conducted in a very cozy manner, and they certainly enhanced mutual personal trust.

In their meeting, both leaders confirmed a wide range of cooperation in such areas as maritime security, anti-terrorism measures, infrastructure development, and peace and development in Mindanao.

I was personally touched by the President's remarks in Tokyo during the joint press announcement. The President called Japan a "special friend closer than a brother."

I'm confident that the ties between Japan and the Philippines will be further strengthened under the Duterte Administration with the help of people like you here. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate my sincere gratitude to all of you for your continued support for our bilateral relations.

Let me highlight some positive developments between our two countries. Japan is the number one trading partner and investor for the Philippines. More than 1,500 Japanese companies are now operating in this country, and the number is growing. In the past several decades, Japan has been the largest donor of ODA for the Philippines.

The flow of tourists between the two countries has been rising at a remarkable rate, with approximately 300 thousand Filipinos visiting Japan annually. The Filipino community is the 3rd largest ethnic group in Japan. Filipino nurses and caregivers are working hard to help support Japan's aging society. So are English teachers in upgrading the language ability of young Japanese.

With these favorable trends in our bilateral relations in mind, Japan is committed to strengthening our strategic partnership and continuously supporting Philippine social and economic development, ranging from infrastructure and maritime security to human resource development and poverty reduction.

Next year, the Philippines will take over the chair of the ASEAN in the auspicious year of its 50th anniversary. Japan will spare no efforts to work more closely with the Philippines for its success.

On this note, I would like to propose a toast to the continued good health of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan and to an enduring friendship between our countries.

Mabuhay!