

Ambassador ENDO's Speech at the 80th Leyte Gulf Landing
Anniversary Commemoration
20 October 2024

Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat!

(Good morning to you all!)

It is a great honor to join you all today at the 80th commemoration of the Leyte Gulf Landings.

I stand here on these hollowed shores with profound reverence. Facing our shared history squarely and reflecting on the bravery of those who made the ultimate deeds and sacrifices during the war are the very foundations of our future-oriented relationship. To Filipino veterans, I extend my sincerest respect to each one of you, whose unwavering dedication and service played a crucial role for the peace, prosperity, stability and dignity of this great nation.

We, the Japanese people, carry within our hearts the fervent understanding that the peace and prosperity we treasure today are built upon the magnanimity and benevolence graciously extended to us by the Filipino people.

This spirit of compassion has been the cornerstone of our reconciliation. It continues to guide our future-oriented partnership. From our past struggles to our present endeavors, countless individuals across various sectors of society in both country have worked tirelessly to rebuild trust and foster an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

Today, our two nations stand closer than ever, not only as partners but as the closest of friends. We will be celebrating the 70th anniversary of the normalization of our diplomatic relations in two years. Milestones that reflect the journey we have shared and the progress we have made together.

Since 1966, Japan has proudly been the largest Official Development Assistance (ODA) donor to the Philippines, actively supporting sustainable growth through numerous initiatives across various areas of cooperation.

The San Juanico Bridge was built in 1973 as one of the Philippine-Japan Friendship Highway Projects connecting Leyte and Samar provinces. Japan has recently been conducting the preparatory survey for construction of the 2nd San Juanico Bridge project. Such infrastructure projects symbolize our shared commitment to the development and well-being of the Filipino people.

People-to-people ties are also robust. Japan is now the most popular destination for Filipino tourists. I expect that we will be welcoming so many Filipino friends again around Christmas this year.

In July, Japan and the Philippines concluded the Second Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting ("2+2") with resounding success. A highlight of which was the signing of the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), marking a new era in our defense collaboration. RAA will further facilitate mutual visits of our forces and strengthen our joint efforts.

Over the years, Japan has continued to strive in bolstering the Philippines' maritime domain awareness (MDA) and maritime law enforcement capabilities. Providing aircrafts to the Philippine Navy, air surveillance radar systems to the Philippine Air Force, and multi-role response vessels to the Philippine Coast Guard.

Our relations now epitomize the profound depth of our special friendship. From the shadows of our past pains, we have emerged as steadfast partners, united in our dedication to promoting peace and prosperity.

Together with the United States and Australia, we have become trusted democratic partners united by a common goal: a Free and Open Indo-Pacific region. In collaboration with other like-minded nations, we have engaged in a wide variety of multilateral exercises, such as the recently

concluded Maritime Cooperative Activity and the 2024 “Sama-Sama” exercises, to enhance regional security cooperation.

As we turn our gazes at the world, we see an international order under strain due to escalating geopolitical tensions. We witness the ongoing aggression of Russia against Ukraine and the deteriorating situations in the Middle East. In our region, the security environment in the East and South China Seas stands as one of the most complex and daunting challenges. We unequivocally oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, as such actions threaten the very foundation of the global order we are dedicated to preserving.

We remain resolute and undeterred. We, the Japanese people, are determined to never allow the devastation of war to be repeated ever again for the sake of present and future generations. By upholding the international order based on the rule of law, I assure that Japan and the Philippines, together with other like-minded countries become united partners in building a world founded on peace, harmony, and goodwill.

Our veterans have passed on to us this shining legacy, and it is our duty as torchbearers to ensure that our shared vision flourishes in the years to come. Let us walk this path together, united in our shared commitment to a prosperous future for both our peoples.

Maraming salamat po!

Mabuhay ang pagkakaibigan ng Japan at Pilipinas!

Mabuhay ang kapayapaan at kaunlaran ating sa rehiyon!