

**Speech of Ambassador ENDO Kazuya at the 71st Anniversary  
of the Japan Self-Defense Forces**  
Reception aboard JS ISE, Manila Bay

*Magandang gabi po sa inyong lahat!*

*Ikinagagalak ko na makasama kayong lahat sa araw na ito.*

It is a great honor that I welcome all of you as we celebrate the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Japan Self-Defense Forces.

This year, the arrangement for this annual celebration is somewhat special. We invite you aboard on this Maritime Self-Defense Force vessel, the JS ISE. Recently, MSDF vessels visit the Philippines more frequently than before. The JS ISE is the 11<sup>th</sup> vessel this year alone. This clearly tells us how far Japan-Philippines security cooperation has come.

Around the world, we are witnessing serious challenges to the rule of law and unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or by coercion. Japan and the Philippines, both maritime democracies situated along critical sea lanes, stand as natural

partners towards a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

I am deeply encouraged by the continuing high-level exchanges taking place not only between Prime Minister ISHIBA and President Marcos, but also among key leaders at the helm of defense and foreign affairs, including Secretary of National Defense Teodoro, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Manalo, National Security Adviser Año, and AFP Chief of Staff General Brawner. In addition, staff level communications are very close. I am delighted to see some graduates of Japan's National Defense Academy present here this evening. You are the vital bridges between our forces. I would like to deeply appreciate all of you and your team to support our relations.

Over the past year, our defense and security cooperation has grown stronger than ever. One of the key moments this year was the official participation of the JS YAHAGI in the Balikatan exercises. Our involvement is no longer a rare occurrence; it is steadily becoming part of our standard practice.

Another milestone in our evolving relationship is the

Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA). Following its approval by the Philippine Senate in December of last year, the RAA was approved by the Japanese Diet earlier this month. This swift and decisive progress speaks to the urgency and strategic value both our nations attach to our security cooperation.

I am also pleased to share that negotiations are now underway for an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), and we have also initiated discussions on a potential future Agreement on the Security of Information.

In pursuit of this shared vision, a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, Japan has participated in Maritime Cooperative Activities in the waters surrounding the Philippines eight times to date.

Beyond our respective alliances with the United States, we must continue to deepen ties with a wider community of like-minded countries committed to the same principles. I thank the attendance of fellow Ambassadors and Military Attachés to this reception.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At this juncture, allow me to express my profound respect for the Armed Forces of the Philippines for their steadfast defense of national sovereignty and principled commitment to the broader responsibilities of international peace and cooperation. Japan remains committed to supporting the continued modernization of the AFP as your unwavering partner and trusted friend.

To that end, Japan have transferred training airplanes and surveillance radar systems, and last week, I had a chance to visit the 2nd Japan-made air defense surveillance radar in the southern Philippines. In addition, we are actively exploring a broad spectrum of opportunities, including collaboration at the defense industry level and the strategic application of Japan's Official Security Assistance, OSA, framework.

All these security collaborations are supported by close friendship widely shared by the public in both our countries, as was also demonstrated during the recent visit of President Marcos to Osaka. It was our great honor to welcome the First Couple in Osaka.

Before concluding, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Rear Admiral NATSUI Takashi of Escort Flotilla Four, and to the dedicated men and women of JS ISE and JS SUZUNAMI, for graciously hosting us this evening. My appreciation also goes to Defense Attaché Colonel AIZAWA and Commander KAWAHATA, and to our colleagues at the Embassy of Japan, for their preparation in ensuring tonight's success. Of course, to my wife, Akiko, for her tireless support and her charm as a hostess of this reception.

As we commemorate the 71st anniversary of the Japan Self-Defense Forces, let this be a moment of celebration and a reaffirmation of our enduring strategic partnership. Together, let us chart a course toward a future shaped not by division but by shared purpose.

*Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat!*

*Mabuhay ang pagkakaibigan ng Japan at Pilipinas!*

end of speech