

Ambassador ENDO Kazuya's Remarks at the Symposium on the 9th Year of the Arbitral Victory

Ladies and gentlemen,

Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat!

*Isang dakilang karangalan ang makiisa sa inyong lahat sa
paggunita ng the 9th anniversary of the 2016 Arbitral Award on the
South China Sea.*

*Taos-puso akong nagpapasalamat sa Stratbase Institute sa
kanilang matatag na paninindigan.* They continue to bring together
voices committed to upholding a rules-based international order.

SECURITY COOPERATION

I am delighted to stand before you right after the successful
trilateral Foreign Minister's Meeting between the Philippines,
Japan, and the United States in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Ministers
confirmed our shared commitment to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

Given the wide range of challenges and increasing divisiveness in the international community, Japan and the Philippines are natural strategic partners. Our cooperation is even more important than ever.

This was emphasized by Prime Minister ISHIBA during his recent visit to the Philippines last April. He expressed his commitment to further develop our relationship, which is bound by a special bond of friendship. Our friendship and mutual trust have also been clearly demonstrated in a series of meetings by Secretary Teodoro, Manalo and Lazaro with the Japanese Ministers.

A milestone in our evolving partnership is the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA). Following its approval by the Philippine Senate in December of last year, the RAA was swiftly approved by the Japanese Diet last month. Given the current severe security environment, the speed of its ratification reveals how decisively both governments view the need to deepen security and defense cooperation.

One of the key moments this year was the official

participation of the JS YAHAGI in the Balikatan exercises. Actually, during the first half of this year, eleven Japan Self Defense Forces vessels have already visited the Philippines.

Once the RAA enters into force, we look forward to even more complex and integrated participation in bilateral and multilateral exercises.

The RAA is a clear signal to our peoples, to our partners, and to the region that Japan and the Philippines are no longer just partners in principle. We are partners in action.

Complementing this, we are currently advancing negotiations on an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). We have also initiated discussions on the possibility of concluding an Information Security related Agreement.

In addition, Japan remains steadfast in its support for the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. This includes defense equipment transfers, such as training aircraft and surveillance radar systems, as well as support through the Official Security Assistance (OSA) framework. My recent visit to the 2nd

Japan-made air surveillance radar site in the southern Philippines reminded what we can achieve when we work together in pursuit of our shared goals for security and stability.

As a demonstration of our shared commitment to upholding international law at sea, including the freedom of navigation and overflight, Japan has participated in eight (8) Maritime Cooperative Activities (MCAs) in the waters surrounding the Philippines, reinforcing transparency, coordination, and operational presence.

In June, our maritime cooperation reached a new height as Japan hosted the first-ever joint training exercise involving the coast guard agencies of the Philippines, the United States, and Japan. BRP Theresa Magbanua, which Japan previously supported, visited Japan to join this exercise.

As part of our enduring commitment under the Official Development Assistance (ODA), Japan will further enhance its capacity-building support to bolster the maritime law enforcement capabilities of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

ARBITRAL AWARD

As one of the most significant achievements related to the rules-based maritime order lies the theme of today.

Nine years ago, the arbitral tribunal delivered a final and legally binding ruling under the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). A landmark ruling concerning the role of historic rights and the source of maritime entitlements.

Upholding and reinforcing the free and open international order based on the rule of law are the benefit of all countries, large and small. Based on this recognition, Japan highly appreciates the position of the Government of the Philippines, which has consistently complied with the award and shown its commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea.

Arbitral process should have been challenging. I pay my deep respect to all those who have worked courageously and tirelessly to get this achievement, including Secretary Lazaro, who had worked as DFA ASPAC chief when the Philippine Government

made the decision to go for the arbitration.

The attitude to neglect the measures for peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with UNCLOS undermines the rule of law in the international community. Japan strongly hopes that the parties' compliance with the award will lead to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea.

Rule of law at sea is one of the most enduring achievements of the United Nations to date. Yet, we are faced with a stark reality: while UNCLOS remains the bedrock of maritime order, efforts to uphold shared initiatives face many challenges.

Unilateral attempts to change the peacefully established status quo by force or coercion in the South China Sea have continued and strengthened. Japan strongly opposes such attempts that threaten regional peace and stability.

We also remain seriously concerned about the claims that are not consistent with the UNCLOS. The award clearly ruled that the so called "nine dash line" had no legal basis under international law. Arbitrary interpretation or application of the UNCLOS cannot be

accepted.

Japan acknowledges the Philippines and ASEAN's commitment to advancing the negotiations of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. We hope that the negotiation will come up with the outcome that is not only substantive but also truly effective, that align with the principles enshrined in the UNCLOS, ensuring that the legitimate rights and interests of all stakeholders are fully respected.

CONCLUSION

We must always remember that the world's oceans are interconnected. Order or disorder in one body of water inevitably ripples across all others.

As evidenced by the presence of so many Ambassadors here today, it is clear: we are stakeholders in the peace and stability of these waters. This shared responsibility calls for action, unity, and a renewed commitment to building comprehensive cooperation.

May we leave this forum inspired not only by what we have

discussed, but by what we are determined to uphold: a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Mabuhay ang kapayapaan sa karagatan ng Indo-Pacific!

Maraming salamat po!
