

Speech of Chargé d'affaires ONO Sho
81st Commemoration of the Leyte Gulf Landing
Anniversary Commemoration
20 October 2025

Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat!

(Good morning to you all!)

It is my profound honor to join you all today to commemorate the 81st Leyte Gulf Landings.

Standing here today, we are reminded of the courage it took and of the immeasurable loss endured in the pursuit of peace. Holding in the highest regard to those who have fallen, their families and loved ones, we remember with utmost reverence those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

To the Filipino veterans who steadfastly served the nation, your act of bravery is a timeless gift for the past, present, and future generations. Your sacrifice gave rise to the peace, stability, and dignity that the nation proudly upholds today.

It is through the magnanimity and benevolence of the Filipino people that we walk a shared path that strengthens our

future-oriented partnership. We, the Japanese people, hold this profound act of grace deep within our hearts, as a lasting reminder of the enduring strength of compassion.

Eighty years have passed since the end of World War II, and we have drawn lessons from the war and have reaffirmed our commitment to preventing such tragedies from ever happening again.

Over the past eight decades, Japan and the Philippines have transformed a painful chapter into a friendship built on mutual trust and grounded in shared values.

As we approach the 70th anniversary of the normalization of our diplomatic relations next year, Japan stands more committed than ever to elevating our partnership to even greater heights. What once began as a journey of reconciliation has now flourished into a vibrant relationship, one that has matured, strengthened, and deepened across generations.

Today, the partnership between Japan and the Philippines has never been stronger. Together, we are broadening our

cooperation across vital areas: economic development, security, people-to-people ties, maritime cooperation, and cultural exchange. Such cooperation is rooted throughout the Philippines.

Here in Leyte, the San Juanico Bridge—constructed in 1973 as part of the Philippine-Japan Friendship Highway Project—stands as a lasting symbol of our partnership. Today, the preparatory study is underway for the construction of a second San Juanico Bridge. I am delighted to see how quality infrastructure supported through Japan's Official Development Assistance continues to drive regional connectivity and economic growth.

I am deeply saddened by the reports of significant damage across central Philippines, due to the recent earthquake off the coast of Cebu. In response, Japan provided emergency relief supplies including tents, blankets, plastic sheets, sleeping pads, poly tanks, water purifiers to the Philippine government to assist people affected by the earthquake. Japanese Self Defense Forces recently conducted an airlift of relief supplies from right here in Tacloban, Leyte to Cebu during the Japan-Philippines joint exercise.

Japan-Philippines partnership has now grown far beyond the bilateral sphere to encompass multilateral initiatives. Alongside our friends and allies—the United States and Australia— and other like-minded countries, Japan and the Philippines now stand as pillars of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. We now work hand in hand to safeguard peace, uphold the rule of law, and promote prosperity and stability across the region.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we gather here today, the world once again stands at a crossroads. Conflict and division threaten the very foundation of the international order we have long protected. In these uncertain times, history reminds us that peace is never given, it is built, protected, and sustained through courage, compassion, and cooperation.

With the memory of our shared history guiding us, Japan holds an unshakable commitment to peace. We will continue to stand with the Philippines in promoting regional stability and ensuring that the sacrifices of our forebears will never be forgotten.

Let this commemoration be a reaffirmation of purpose. That

our nations, once divided, now walk united on a path of peace and mutual respect.

Let us continue to honor the past by building a future worthy of their sacrifice. A future where our people thrive together, our nations stand as one, and the light of peace never fades from our shores.

Maraming salamat po.

Mabuhay ang pagkakaibigan ng Japan at Pilipinas.

Mabuhay ang kapayapaan!

(Thank you very much. Long live the friendship between Japan and the Philippines. Long live peace!)