

Dr. Hiroko NAGAI, Ateneo de Manila Professor;

Esteemed guests, mga kaibigan,

Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat. Good afternoon.

It is my privilege to welcome you all to this momentous gathering. It is an honor to share in these celebrations of friendship with you all. We have friends from the University of the Philippines, Diliman and from the Ateneo de Manila university. Some say that when UP and Ateneo meet, it is always a Battle of Katipunan. On this occasion, I believe we stand not as rivals but as partners in honoring a distinguished mentor.

We salute those who have carried our bond to greater, unprecedented heights. We honor an extraordinary individual, one whose work has been acknowledged by Japan's own Foreign Minister.

On behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, we proudly present this commendation today to our awardee, Dr. Hiroko Nagai.

Diplomacy is an art that requires harmony to achieve a higher purpose. It is a demanding symphony that requires not only skill,

but mindful collaboration. As both a scholar and musician, Dr. Nagai's works have affirmed the similar harmony in the academic and cultural field.

I remember a certain event where I enjoyed her artistry firsthand. It was during a Yakishime exhibition by the Japan Foundation in July last year, one of my earlier engagements. I was also delighted to welcome her to this very residence in May this year, as a member of the Philippine academe.

Embodying our growing exchanges, Dr. Nagai is also a researcher specializing in Philippine studies. After years in the Philippines, I hear she has also grown quite fluent in Filipino. With gratitude and respect, she is honored today as a symbol of the friendship and understanding that continue to flourish between Japan and the Philippines.

With her experience as a professor and Japanese studies director, she fostered mutual understanding through the knowledge she generously shared. From language to culture, her dedication introduced Japan's richness to countless, curious Filipinos.

Thanks to her efforts, Japanese studies remain well-represented in some of the nation's top universities.

Dr. Nagai's impact, however, extends far beyond the corners of lecture halls. With her mastery of the koto, a traditional Japanese instrument, she has earned the admiration of her students and listeners alike.

A dedicated educator, she serves as TUGMA Koto Ensemble director, a performing group for the University of the Philippines. As a celebrated composer, she has worked with talented musicians, theater artists, and movie makers.

Among her many accolades, Dr. Nagai received the prestigious FAMAS Awards in 2019 for Outstanding Musical Score. Her skills also earned a nomination for best sound design during the 2016 Metro Manila Film Festival.

Dr. Nagai's work has truly enriched our two countries' friendship. As we approach the 70th Anniversary of diplomatic relations, we look forward to her continued contributions: bringing our people closer through insightful lectures and compelling concerts.

In light of her achievements, I hope everyone will join me in saying: *Omedetou Gozaimasu, Dr. Nagai*. Today you are the pride of not one, but two peoples, (pause) cultures, (pause) and nations.

Like your koto, our countries' friendship is an impressive instrument: formed by intricate strings and bridges of human connections.

Through your tireless devotion, you have helped tune these enduring connections, helping produce a harmony worthy of our close bond.

Maraming salamat po! Mabuhay si Dr. Nagai.

Arigatou gozaimasu.