

*Marajaw na buntag Sa ijo tanan* (Good morning to all of you.)

On behalf of Ambassador ENDO Kazuya, I am honored to read his message.

It is a true honor for the Embassy of Japan to join you all today in the 81st commemoration of the Battle of Surigao Strait.

We extend our deepest respect to the Filipino veterans whose courage and sacrifice continue to inspire generations. Your service and ultimate sacrifices paved the way for the independence, sovereignty, and dignity of this great nation.

As we gather here, we are reminded of the courage it took and of the immeasurable loss endured in the pursuit of peace. To all who fell, and to their families and loved ones, we offer our heartfelt prayers and remembrance.

Eight decades have passed since the end of the Second World War. Having learned the profound lessons from war, Japan has since taken the path of peace with determination and has dedicated itself to promoting stability and prosperity, particularly.

Looking back at how far we have come, Japan and the Philippines have embraced hope and compassion with each other after tremendous efforts to mend bilateral ties. It is a hard-earned peace accomplished through the tireless efforts of our predecessors who witnessed the tragedies of war and inherited the peace to our generation.

For this, we have nothing but the deepest respect and gratitude for all those who have passed this legacy on to us.

Next year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the normalization of our diplomatic relations. It is a milestone that reflects how far we have come

and the strength of our journey. From reconciliation, a dynamic relationship has emerged spanning a range of vital areas including economy, security, cultural exchanges, and humanitarian cooperation. In every passing year, our enduring friendship only grows stronger, deeper, and more meaningful.

Japan is proud to stand as not only the Philippines' top ODA partner, supporting development across the archipelago, but also a close partner on a wide range of area, from trade and investment, maritime security, to the Mindanao peace process, among others. Here in Surigao del Norte, Taganito, Sumitomo Metal Mining Co., Ltd. has been operating while contributing to the local community through building infrastructure, increasing employment, and preserving biodiversity.

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.

I learned that Surigao del Norte and the Dinagat Islands have also experienced several earthquakes this year. Japan remains committed to bolstering the Philippines' disaster risk reduction and resilience—further deepening the friendship and trust between our two nations.

The Japan–Philippines partnership has evolved beyond the bilateral sphere into a cornerstone of broader regional cooperation.

Today, Japan, the Philippines, the United States, and Australia—once divided by war—now stand united as partners in safeguarding peace

and stability in the region. One symbol of this enduring solidarity is our bilateral and multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activities, which advance our shared commitment to regional security and to upholding international law. Together, through these joint efforts, we stand hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder to advance our shared vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific — a region of peace, stability, and shared prosperity for all.

Today, the world once again stands at a crossroads. Conflicts and divisions in various parts of the world threaten the very foundations of the international order that has long upheld peace and stability. In these uncertain times, we are reminded that peace is never guaranteed—it must be built, protected, and sustained through courage, compassion, and cooperation. The unwavering belief in peace nurtured by both Japan and

the Philippines, and our allies and partner continue contribute global peace, serves as our guiding principle.

Let this solemn occasion remind us of our shared duty to protect and enrich this peace, transforming the memory of sacrifice into the promise of a better future for the generations yet to come.

Together, let us continue to build a world where lasting peace and prosperity thrive for all.

**Salamat karajaw!**

(Thank you very much.)

**Mabuhay ang pagkakaibigan ng Japan at Pilipinas!**

(Long live the friendship of Japan and the Philippines!)

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