

Good morning. Ohayougozaimasu. Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat.

On behalf of the Government of Japan, it is my distinct honor to address this distinguished gathering where great minds and industry movers exchange views on sustainable urban transformation, aligning with the eleventh Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the United Nations.

Japan fully recognizes its role in promoting the SDGs. Though compound crises, including pandemic, aggressions, and climate change, have impeded the progress on the SDGs, Japan continues to be firmly committed to working hand-in-hand with vulnerable countries and regions. Public awareness of the SDGs has significantly grown in Japan over the years with a high degree of incorporation into society. One survey showed that as of 2023, 91.6% of Japanese respondents were aware of the SDGs, exceeding the average of 77% across 17 other surveyed countries. You might have been amazed to see many a Japanese businessman wearing an SDG pin like this on his suit in commuter trains in Tokyo. We also passed a significant milestone on Goal Five related to our government's top leadership.

On its eleventh goal, the importance of cities lies in both their roles as home to a significant portion of the global population, and as primary engines of economic growth. I would like to touch upon three aspects of Japan's measures; our own domestic efforts to promote smart cities; efforts to promote urban transformation in other countries; and our cooperation with the Philippines, in particular.

Smart City Promotion in Japan

Firstly, Japanese big cities have long been well-known for its efficient public transportation systems, tidiness of public area, well-protected public security, and efficiency of use of spaces. They have already had solid foundations for environmentally friendly Eco cities, Transit-Oriented Development, and Disaster resiliency.

But, in the 2010s, Japan also recognized the need to further promote Smart Cities with the aim of tackling the challenges of an aging and declining population, and ensuring energy efficiency. What we aim to achieve are even more inclusive, safer, more resilient, and more sustainable cities. To date, almost 1000 entities,

companies, local governments and others, are working together to advance to Society 5.0 for sustainability in urban areas to further improve the well – being of our citizens.

Smart Cities utilize new technologies and huge amount of data to provide each citizen with personalized services in such areas as energy, waste, health, and security. Infrastructure management through sensing technology, people-flow analysis and survey through camera, autonomous driving and mobility as a service, disaster management through real-time-data analysis, are parts of some efforts to promote smart cities.

It also aims to solve urban issues while constantly creating new values. We have been harnessing the potential of ICT to create an ecosystem that will promote organic economic development in cities such as Sendai, Tokyo, and Osaka.

Japan's Cooperation with Globe

Secondly, Japan has also consistently advanced cooperation with numerous countries worldwide to enhance urban sustainability and elevate the quality of life for their residents.

One prime example of our endeavors is the development of robust public transportation systems. Public transportation not only facilitates the smooth movement of goods and people, thereby fostering economic prosperity, but also offers substantial environmental benefits. Its efficient operations lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and a significant mitigation of air pollution.

Furthermore, public transportation plays a vital role in fostering social inclusion by providing affordable and safe mobility options for individuals who do not own private vehicles, thus encouraging greater social participation and equality. Those of us residing in Manila understand deeply how profoundly the alleviation of traffic congestion can impact and improve the quality of life for all.

Japan, through JICA, has been conducting a wide range of cooperation; from establishing Master Plans, supporting Construction, Organizational Management to Operation and Maintenance.

Japan has supported the construction of public railways not only in the Philippines, but also in Viet Nam, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, and so on.

Another critical initiative Japan has advanced to enhance urban sustainability is building safe cities through disaster risk reduction.

Strengthening urban resilience against disasters means not only protecting the urban infrastructure itself but also stabilizing and safeguarding people's lives and livelihoods. Japan is not only a natural disaster-prone country, but it also has a long history of defending its people from disasters. In my hometown, Yamanashi prefecture, the embankment built by Takeda Shingen in the 16th century has long been well-known. The United Nations General Assembly designated November 5 as World Tsunami Awareness Day in 2015, remembering the Tsunami following the Nankai earthquake in 1854.

Leveraging the expertise and technologies refined over centuries of dealing with various natural disasters, Japan has consistently contributed to disaster risk reduction and enhancing national resilience in other nations. Our uniqueness is the holistic and comprehensive approach for disaster risk reduction and “Build Back Better”, seamlessly covering from emergency response, rehabilitation/reconstruction, to improvement and capacity development in order to prepare for the next disaster.

Let me introduce just some of the projects Japan has implemented in our region.

For instance, in Malaysia, we supported the construction of the Beris Dam, which is crucial for water resource security in Kedah State. In Mongolia, we've contributed to the enhancement of Ulaanbaatar's water supply and improved its meteorological observation systems. Furthermore, in Indonesia, we have also provided support for the construction of sediment control dams to prepare for volcanic eruptions, and for the installation of rainfall radar systems.

These are just a few illustrations among many. Japan has consistently contributed to sustainable urban development and the improvement of people's lives globally, all in pursuit of the SDGs.

Japan-Philippines Cooperation

Lastly, as the Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of the Philippines, it is my privilege to elaborate further on Japan's contributions to the cities and people of this great nation.

Here in Manila, you are well aware of key projects such as the extensions of LRT Line 1 and Line 2, the rehabilitation of MRT Line 3, and the ongoing construction of the Metro Manila Subway and the North-South Commuter Railway – all of which are being implemented with the support of Japanese ODA. What's more, the Japanese private sector is also making huge contributions in the maintenance and operations of the existing railways.

In addition to our extensive cooperation in the railway sector, Japan is also partnering with the Philippine government on the development of vital expressways. One on-going project is the Davao City Bypass Road, mitigating the congestion in Davao City. In Cebu City, our collaboration has involved the construction of coastal roads and bridges, as well as master plan formulation, all aimed at alleviating traffic congestion and enhancing urban sustainability.

Furthermore, as both Japan and the Philippines are prone to natural disasters, Japan is also cooperating on strengthening disaster prevention and preparedness in the Philippines. For example, Since the 1970s, JICA has been supporting Disaster Risk Reduction investment in the Philippines through flood control planning, capacity building, and human resource development. In the case of the Typhoon Ulysses in 2020, it is estimated that Japan-supported flood control measures for Metro Manila, officially known as the “Pasig-Marikina River Channel Improvement Project”, reduced economic damage by about 85%. Actually, the “Pasig-Marikina River Improvement Project” started in 1999 through Japan's concessional loan, and is still on-going in Phase Four.

Japan has also been assisting in the introduction of an emergency warning broadcast system for disaster risk reduction and management, such as the Philippines' nationwide adoption of the ISDB – T for Emergency Warning Broadcast System in 2015. Moreover, the Government of Japan is supporting the initiatives of Japanese venture companies like Spectee, which provides AI-powered disaster damage information aggregation services to the Philippine

national and local governments.

While public transportation and disaster management are the two most fundamental areas, there are so many other areas where we are cooperating.

Please allow me to raise just one example collaboration with the University of the Philippines (UP) headed by President Jimenez. Japan has decided to provide the Philippines with a dedicated Open RAN laboratory in UP early this year. Open RAN allows for more players in key services, and control in network management.

In the private sector, two Japanese companies have formed collaborations with the Philippine government on digital transformation technology. The first is Spectee I mentioned earlier, and second is InfiniVAN which is working together with UP on LikasGPT, a Large Language Model (LLM) tailored to the indigenous languages of the Philippines, for accessible communication for all Filipinos.

Underlying this extensive support for urban development overseas is Japan's own advanced urban management expertise. In Tokyo prefecture alone, there are more than 80 railway lines operated by more than 15 railway companies. If you include railway systems in the entirety of Japan, there are thousands of stations operated by over a hundred companies. While Japan is also prone to a wide range of natural disasters, it is yet widely regarded as one of the safest countries in the world.

I am firmly convinced that sharing the efficient and safe urban management with the world is indeed a crucial means to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my deep appreciation to the organizers for having such a valuable platform to advance efforts for achieving the SDGs here in Manila, and, particularly to Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for playing a pivotal role in the creation and promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals for the entire planet.

Arigatogozaimasu. Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat at Mabuhay kayong lahat. Thank you very much.