

**Remarks of Ambassador ENDO Kazuya at the “Harmony of Friendship: A Jazz Prelude to 70 Years of Japan-Philippines Ties” Opening Reception**

20 January 2026 at the Proscenium Theater, Rockwell, Makati City

Magandang gabi at maligayang bagong taon po sa inyong lahat. Thank you all for being here this evening.

It is our true and deep honor to be in the presence of First Lady Louise Araneta-Marcos and many other distinguished guests today.

This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the normalization of our diplomatic relations. With this jazz reception, we celebrate our nations’ longstanding friendship. On this evening of harmony, it is fitting we look back on our countries’ lasting partnership.

The logo behind me embodies seven powerful decades of our journey as friends. There is great meaning in the motif of these traditional weaving ropes. Japan’s “Shimenawa” rope has been traditionally used to mark sacred spaces and is used for protection and to symbolize continuity. The Filipino Abaca has long been valued for its resilience and versatility. Together, these two ropes meld in this true expression of unity. The logo captures our anniversary theme: “Weaving the Future Together: Peace,

Prosperity, Possibilities.”

True to this concept, our friendship was woven from the fabric of willing possibilities.

President Elpidio Quirino’s pardon of Japanese prisoners in 1953 provided the hopeful thread: allowing a renewal for our ties in 1956 to unfurl with benevolence.

In 1957, the visit of Prime Minister Kishi, grandfather of late Prime Minister Abe, to the Philippines signaled a hopeful move. The following year, President Carlos Garcia became the first foreign head to address two chambers of the Japanese Diet. These early exchanges laid the foundation for a relationship that continues to evolve.

Then Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko made their first visit to the Philippines in 1962. They were welcomed by stronger Japan-Philippine relations during their return as Emperor and Empress of Japan in 2016.

The visit made by Prime Minister Fukuda in 1977 hosted by President Marcos, Sr., yielded a bold piece of policy. The aptly named Fukuda doctrine sprang from this visit, forming key frameworks for Japan-ASEAN relations: Peace-loving Nation,

Heart-to-Heart Relations, and Equal Partner to the Unity of ASEAN.

We see the cordial spirit of these exchanges endure to this very day. In October last year, President Marcos Jr. was the first foreign leader that our Prime Minister Takaichi met since her inauguration.

Since normalization, cooperation has formed the backbone of our relations. First built in 1960, the Japan-Philippines Friendship highway has sought to stimulate the economy and provide ease of travel. Since then, we have seen countless infrastructure projects in the Philippines supported by Japan.

On a grassroots level, thousands of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers have been deployed since 1966 to uplift Filipino lives.

More than 1600 Japanese companies are operating their business in the Philippines.

We are also working together for our security, peace and stability in the region.

Our people-to-people exchanges also form the strong lifeblood of Japan and the Philippines' vibrant relations.

During the recent EXPO 2025 in Osaka, the Philippine's Pavilion won the Silver Award for its outstanding design. It is worth noting that the Philippine Pavilion won “Top 10 design” during Japan’s first EXPO in 1970, also in Osaka, where then First Lady Imelda Marcos represented the Philippines.

In the field of sports, the Philippines won its hallmark glories in Olympic games in Japan. During the first Tokyo Olympics in 1964, the Philippines saw its first silver Olympic medal in boxing. In Tokyo’s latest hosting of the Olympic games in 2021, Hidilyn Diaz made history as the Philippines’ first ever gold medalist. Japan-trained athlete Carlos Yulo also won awards and crowds, in the 2024 Olympics. Their feat in winning gold remains a timely symbol of our relations’ golden age.

While Japan is now among the most popular tourist destination for our Filipino friends, programs such as the MEXT Scholarship and JET Programme continue to enhance our relations with enlightened linkages.

Seven decades on, I believe our countries have composed a timeless symphony of friendship. And 2026 marks a truly pivotal year.

To set the tempo of this exciting year, what better way than with a

musical celebration. It is in jazz we find the best virtues of our friendship: in its restless desire to create, collaborate, and harmonize. So let tonight be one of many new threads we contribute to the boundless tapestry of our friendship; one future generations can aspire to cherish and maintain.

Nais ko sa inyo ang isang napaka-saya at masaganang bagong taon.

Maraming salamat po at Mabuhay ang pagkakaibigan ng Japan at Pilipinas!

Thank you all once again for coming.