

## **Remarks of Ambassador ENDO Kazuya at the Baguio City**

### **Panagbenga Festival Grand Floral Float Parade**

**1 March 2026**

Naimbag a bigat kadakayo amin.

Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat!

They say Baguio is one of the country's coldest destinations, but nothing could be warmer than the welcome I've received today.

I would like to first thank Mayor Magalong, Congressman Mauricio Domogan, and the city of Baguio for inviting me to my first Panagbenga experience.

It is a joy and a privilege to be here for this year's festival with its theme, 'Blooming without End.' And speaking of "blooming without end" — I am fortunate to be here with my lovely wife Akiko today.

From Session Road to Burnham Park, the views from Baguio offer an energetic charm unlike any other. With its vibrant locals and Japanese-

Filipino community, it is difficult not to feel at home here.

But this sentiment goes beyond feeling. I have heard recently that after seven years of careful efforts, the sakura, or cherry blossom trees at the Baguio Country Club finally bloomed this year.

As its caretakers beautifully noted, they are a testament to patience, nature, and time.

Nurtured by both Japanese and Filipino hands, the Sakura stands as a timely symbol of our partnerships. Few metaphors can capture our bond better than a proud symbol of Japan taking root through our friendship.

I am happy to say I carry a similar gesture of friendship close at home. During a previous visit, I received a Benguet pine from Mayor Magalong which I had planted at my Residence.

Like the Sakura trees, I hope for it to symbolize the deep relationship between Japan and the Philippines, as well as Japan and Baguio. Its growth will honor the historical ties between Japanese and Filipinos,

from the Benguet immigrants to the present day.

Every visit to Baguio seems to bring a new reason to fall in love with the city. I have found yet another reason with this magnificent “Grand Floral Float Parade.”

As we watch the Parade today, I am reminded of traditional Ikebana—the Japanese art of arranging flowers that brings people closer to nature.

I see its same creative spirit in the way floats are designed: in the way it showcases the unique artistry of Baguio and the Cordilleras, as well as the unity it brings through flowers.

But beyond its marvelous floral displays, I find beauty in the Panagbenga Festival’s story.

From a devastating quake, the festival was born from a will to rise from the rubble. It brought a celebration that traded darker days for brighter flowers, with dances that defied despair.

On this 30th Anniversary of the festival, it is clear that Baguio has not only survived, but thrived as a community. The festival has not only

grown with this city, it has carried the very spirit of Baguio.

With its undeniable charm, Panagbenga embodies what I have come to know of the Filipino spirit: creative, warm, and unwavering. Above all, It is Baguio's people that has helped the city "bloom without end."

This celebration brings me to another milestone I hold dear: the 70<sup>th</sup> year of Japan-Philippines friendship. With this Festival's theme, I see the perfect reflection of our nations' ties.

From the 1990 earthquake to recent challenges, Baguio has forged an admirable resilience from its trials. Similarly, our two nations have forged a path from past rifts, rebuilding a bond centered on enduring peace and prosperity.

Just as this festival celebrates new beginnings, our seven decades of friendship invite us to do the same. Like the Sakura tree that recently bloomed, years of careful commitment have allowed us to stand stronger together, as friends.

People of Baguio, I thank you all for this chance to share in your joy

today. I also thank the hardworking musicians, florists, and artisans who have brought life to this incredible festival.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Japan, I congratulate the city on a spectacular celebration.

May Baguio, its people, and the enduring friendship between Japan and the Philippines continue blooming without end.

*Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat.*

*Agyamanak and a Happy Panagbenga to you all!*