

Speech of Deputy Chief of Mission ONO Sho

82nd Commemoration of the Leyte Gulf Landings

Esteemed Filipino Veterans;

Distinguished colleagues from the diplomatic corps,

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat!

It is a profound honor to commemorate the 82nd Leyte Gulf Landing with you all.

Standing on this historic ground, we remember the immense suffering brought by war, and that peace must never be taken for granted. Deepest respects go out to all who lost their lives, and to their families and loved ones. We also honor the courage of Filipino veterans, whose sacrifices paved the way for the peace we cherish today, reminding us that preserving it is a solemn responsibility we must carry forward.

The friendship between Japan and the Philippines owes much to the benevolence of the Filipino people, whose embrace of reconciliation we hold close to our hearts with profound gratitude.

More than eight decades have passed since the end of the Second World War. Japan, as a peace-loving nation, has consistently upheld its fundamental commitment to peace, reflecting deeply upon the lessons of war and recognizing the importance of preventing the devastation of conflict from ever being repeated.

This year holds particular significance for Japan and the Philippines as we celebrate the **70th anniversary of the normalization of our diplomatic relations**. Over these seven decades, our two countries have transformed a painful past into a lasting friendship founded on trust and mutual respect.

The State Visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to Japan in May this year marked an important milestone in our journey. During the visit, President Marcos and Prime Minister TAKAICHI Sanae agreed to elevate our bilateral relationship to a

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Building on this elevated partnership, Japan and the Philippines further deepen cooperation across a broad range of fields, from economic development, infrastructure, and energy security to maritime security, defense, and people-to-people exchanges, translating our shared vision into meaningful benefits for both our nations and our peoples as well as the entire region.

Our partnership is reflected in our joint pursuit to drive economic growth, enhance connectivity and strengthen disaster resilience. As the Philippines' largest provider of **Official Development Assistance**, we remain steadfast in advancing the growth, ensuring that the benefits of our partnership reach all Filipinos, including the communities here in Eastern Visayas.

From major infrastructure plans like the **Second San Juanico Bridge project** to grassroots assistance, our cooperation spans across crucial sectors. Over the years, we have worked hand-in-hand with local communities here, **from constructing classrooms in Ormoc City to providing ambulances and**

medical equipment in Southern Leyte and Palo.

Continuing this path, we are pleased that later this month, we are planning to implement a new project to **provide a shuttle bus and a garage for a youth facility in Tacloban City through NGO Streetlight Philippines Inc**, ensuring our support directly empowers the younger generation.

Ladies and gentlemen, today, from disrupted global transit routes in the Middle East to rising tensions in the South China Sea, the rules-based international order faces unprecedented strain. In these challenging times, history reminds us that peace is never given; it must be built, defended, and sustained through steadfast cooperation and shared determination. Japan remains resolutely committed to peace and will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Philippines.

From this point of view, our partnership in the field of defense and security continues to grow in depth and substance, strengthening our collective resolve. The **Reciprocal Access Agreement**, which entered into force last year, provides an

important framework for facilitating greater cooperation between our two nations. The **Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement**, or ACSA, which entered into force last August, further strengthens the foundation for our practical cooperation and logistical support.

Our partnership has evolved into a cornerstone of regional stability. Working closely with our friends and partners, including the United States and Australia, as well as other like-minded countries, Japan and the Philippines continue to contribute to the realization of **an updated Free and Open Indo-Pacific and upholding the rule of law and fostering regional stability**.

In closing, as we gather to commemorate the Leyte Gulf Landings, let us honor their memory by renewing our enduring pledge to peace. Together, let us strive for a future where compassion prevails over conflict, understanding bridges differences, and the hope for a more peaceful tomorrow endures in the hearts of generations to come. *Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat.*

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

Mabuhay ang kapayapaan at pagkakaisa!