

Draft Speech for Chief Representative SAKAMOTO Takema
Signing of R/D for Project for Enhancement of
Flood Control Strategy in Prioritized River Basins
January 17, 2024

Honorable Secretary, Manuel M Bonoan

Senior Undersecretary, Emil K. Sadain

Project Director, Ramon A. Arriola

Second Secretary of the Embassy of Japan, KINOSHITA Akito

and DPWH colleagues, friends.

Magandang Umaga po and Manigong Bagong Taon!

Thank you very much for your warm welcome today.

This is truly a significant and commemorable event for this year, as this is my very first event for 2024 with one of our closest partners, DPWH.

So, I am very excited to be here to sign the Record of Discussion for this extremely important project.

Back in November 2023, I attended the “Seminar on Development and Operation of Large-Scale or Basin-Wide Flood Control and IWRM facilities”, where Hon. Parliamentary Vice Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, KOYARI Takashi, also attended.

DPWH and MLIT, in addition to JICA, exchanged views and expertise on (1) water resources management and flood control, (2) sediment control in dam operations, and (3) countermeasures against storm water, to name a few.

This kind of partnership and knowledge co-creation efforts plays an important role in the success of Japan-Philippines cooperation!

For today, I'd like to acknowledge the further wide-ranging collaboration with our counterparts especially the Unified Project Management Office headed by Senior Undersecretary Emil Sadain and the Flood Control Management Cluster, headed by Project Director Ramon Arriola.

This cooperation is vital especially in times of large-scale flood disasters and emergencies.

And this cooperation proves why coordination and planning are needed.

As you may all know, JICA's approach to disaster resiliency has been tested many times.

Our emphasis on disaster preparedness has worked in Japan.

More importantly, we have observed that disaster preparedness can save lives and economic losses even in other disaster-prone countries like our beloved Philippines.

According to a report by the UNDRR, one US dollar prior investment for disaster preparedness can save up to fifteen US dollars for post-disaster recovery.

Therefore, this new collaboration for master plans and pre-feasibility studies of Pasig-Marikina and Cagayan Rivers plays a crucial role in looking at current infrastructure and activities against disasters.

Our commitment to quality infrastructure remains.

We highly value that the Philippines is prioritizing the implementation of quality infrastructures to make sure that economic growth is inclusive, sustainable and resilient.

I always mention the case of the flood control projects in Pasig-Marikina River.

For the flood control purpose, we have been working together with you since 1970s, as an example as to why we should take disaster management seriously.

A simulation based on the data from Typhoon Ulysses in 2020, for instance, showed that our close and serious endeavors for the river improvement projects reduced the impact of floods significantly.

From the estimated economic losses of \$1.3 billion dollars without the projects, the losses have now gone to only \$0.2 billion dollars.

We could save more than \$1 billion dollars!

For example, through our joint achievements for decades, such as improved floodways and developed capacity on river management, the number of residents affected by floods coming from Pasig-Marikina River also had been reduced to 30 thousand people, from previous one million in past situations.

Reduced by 97%!

The concept of “prior investment” is extremely important that we cannot overemphasize.

In any case, as such, the Philippine experience against disasters is witnessing our joint efforts are working in the right direction.

However, we have recently witnessed increasing extreme weather events, such as floods and storms, threatening people’s lives and property.

Economic damages are also gigantic.

And, still the Philippines ranks the highest disaster risk country in the world.

Therefore it is very critical to ensure the continuous review and update of plans and policies for better management of natural disasters.

After this 1.5-year long new technical cooperation project, through another close joint efforts, I believe we can see the excellent flood control master plans in Pasig-Marikina and Cagayan River basins.

It will be a guidepost toward achievement of 100-year flood safety even with climate change impact.

We are very pleased to facilitate the basin-wide discussions among various stakeholders, even with conflict of interest between flood control and water use, by sharing Japan's long stand experiences.

In this sense, it should be noted that this project aligns with the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028.

As we all know, the Philippine Development Plan advocates the multi-purpose use of water that has also taken time in Japan, and we have lessons and tips in this field.

At this point, I'd like to appreciate all of you for your strong commitment to enhancing disaster resiliency in this beautiful country.

As your reliable partner and true friend, JICA is always with you.

Kasama nyo kami in your journey to building a safer, resilient and prosperous future for many Filipinos.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat at Mabuhay!

Arigatou Gozaimashita.