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Colleagues from various Japanese Institutions,
Distinguished Participants and Friends,

Magandang Umaga po sa inyong lahat.

First, let me convey my deepest appreciation to all of you, who are present both in-person and online, for the 5th Joint Coordinating Committee Meeting of the “Establishment of the One Health Prevention and Treatment Network Model for the Elimination of Rabies in the Philippines”, also known as “JAPOHR” project.

It is quite unfortunate that I am not able to be there to personally join you. Really unfortunately, I cannot leave Makati today. But it is definitely a great pleasure to hold this JCC event in person, after years of the consecutive online JCCs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

JAPOHR, as we all know, is already in the last year of the cooperation term. We, at JICA, are very happy to recognize its achievements that have been made by the project, despite such and such implementation challenges encountered during the pandemic.

It is worth noting that the JAPOHR project has introduced several initiatives to eradicate rabies in Region 3. And then, those initiatives are shared and expanded to other regions in the country, including Regions 4, 7, and 11.

The project also supported disease surveillance through an Immunochromatographic test kit and Rabies Data Share System to several Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratories in the Philippines, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture – Bureau of Animal Industry. Several studies were also conducted and published under the project.

These groundbreaking achievements will not be possible without the various efforts of project experts and counterparts from Japan and Philippine side. As such, I acknowledge the active participation of all the academic and research institutions and government agencies.

JAPOHR, as you know, is implemented under JICA's SATREPS program. Through our cooperation, JAPOHR has successfully achieved the mission of SATREPS, which is to promote international joint research to answer society's challenges. JAPOHR, for instance, established a One Health approach-based prevention and treatment network model to eliminate rabies in the Philippines.

Aside from the technically right information, data, and knowledge, what is more important for the decision makers is to take the initiative to lead this country on science-based policies for sustainable growth and future success.

Your contribution to the project illustrates the recognition of the need for a one-health approach in mitigating rabies here in the Philippines. We therefore hope that this project will be one of the instruments in creating a safer environment for the Filipinos.

Actually, I believe this JAPOHR project is now becoming an exemplary cooperation. We are now creating a role model for other cooperation projects. We should be proud of that.

However, I am looking forward to the continuous commitment and support of all our stakeholders and friends here today to ensure the project's sustainability. Your active involvement is surely crucial for a rabies-free future of the Philippines. And I believe you can do it.

For that purpose, I hope that today you can have very fruitful discussions!

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Maraming salamat po.

Mabuhay, Good morning to all of you.