

Speech for JICA Chief Representative SAKAMOTO Takema
The 120th Anniversary of Japanese Migration in the Philippines and
the 20th Anniversary of Philippine Nikkeijin Legal Support Center

Good evening.

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Magandang gabi po sa inyong lahat.
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Maayong Gabii sa inyong tanan.
こんばんは。

It is my great honor and privilege to have such an opportunity to give a speech in front of all of you to celebrate the 120th year of ***Japanese migration in the Philippines*** and the 20th year of ***the Philippine Nikkeijin Legal Support Center***.

Japan and the Philippines' relationship is really exceptional.

And, the fact that our predecessors' choice of the Philippines as one of the destinations to migrate and explore new opportunities 120 years ago is a testament of the strong bond that our countries share.

Looking back to the history, Japanese migrants to the Philippines contributed greatly to development of infrastructure and industry in this lovely country before the World War II.

The very first ones to arrive in the Philippines helped in constructing the *Kennon Road* in *Baguio*, and then they moved to *Davao* for further opportunities.

While, here in *Davao*, the very first Japanese migrants worked for *Abaca* or *Manila hemp*, and more than 20,000 migrants engaged in its cultivation, playing a crucial role in *Davao*'s development in the early years.

This was a truly memorable history for our special relationship.

The hardship Japanese migrants faced after the war is beyond description.

I have heard that they had to live hiding their Japanese ancestries for a long time after the war.

Thus, it is only befitting for us to also celebrate the *20-year achievements of the Philippine Nikkei-jin Legal Support Center* or *PNLSC* for the role it plays in connecting the families of Japanese descendants in the Philippines to their Japanese roots.

Not only did it help families reunite, but it also continues to forge strong bonds among the *Nikkeijin* residents and the communities that they chose to call their “homes”.

I believe that *PNLSC* will continue to thrive and will always be a source of “hope” for individuals and families as they go through their journey of recovering their identities and reuniting with their loved ones.

Actually, “*No-One-Left-Behind*” is JICA’s firm policy.

Today, taking this opportunity, allow me to briefly inform you that we JICA are committed to work together for the development of *Davao* and also the entire Philippines following in the footsteps of our great predecessors based on our three major pillars for the operations: The three pillars are;

- (1) To pursue overall economic growth through infrastructure and investment promotion;
- (2) To address human security issues, such as poverty, food security, education, health, disaster vulnerabilities; and
- (3) To achieve peace and development in Mindanao.

In my 2 years of assignment since last year, as JICA Chief Representative in the Philippines, *Davao* is one of the areas that I have visited the most, because we are implementing many projects in this area.

One of the projects is the *Davao City Bypass Construction Project*, the very first mountainous tunnel in the Philippines!

It will surely bring various benefits to all of you, such as reduced traffic congestion, improved accessibility, boosted economy, and uplifted Quality of Life.

In fact, I just visited this lovely city, “*Crown Jewel of Mindanao*”, *Davao* two weeks ago, to sign an agreement document, with Hon. *NEDA Secretary Balisacan* with the presence of *HE VP Sara Duterte*, for “*the Comprehensive and Sustainable Urban Development Master Plan for Metropolitan Davao*”.

This Master Plan has a big significance not only for *Davao* but also for the rest of the country to form a hub of equitable regional development.

These are just a few examples of our initiatives.

JICA will continue to cooperate in the development of the Philippines through various projects to ensure that no one, including Japanese migrants, will be left behind.

In closing, I would like to thank *the Mindanao Kokusai Daigaku* led by *Dr. Ines Yamanouchi Mallari*, for hosting this memorable event.

Let me reiterate JICA's unchanged, no, enhanced commitment to our cooperation in the Philippines, as the closest and the most reliable partner.

I am confident that our cooperation will further strengthen the foundation of the relationship between Japan and the Philippines laid by our predecessors.

Last but not least,,

Let me recall, earlier this month, *Japan's Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio* paid his very successful visit to this lovely country.

And in his Congress Speech in *Manila, the Prime Minister* stated that we will jointly create a new era of sustainable and prosperous development together with trust.

Mr. Prime Minister also mentioned several important key phrases, such as the “*Heart-to-Heart Ties*” and “*Golden Friendship, Golden Opportunities.*”

I think that today we are witnessing the actual “*Heart-to-Heart Ties*” and “*Golden Friendship, Golden Opportunities.*”

マブハイ
Mabuhay!

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

マラミン サラマツポ
Maraming salamat po.

ダグハン サラマツ
Daghang salamat.

ありがとうございました。