

Davao City Councilor Pilar Braga  
Davao History Society President, Dr. Luzviminda Ilagan  
Veteran Micheal Petinglay, Veterans Federation of the Philippines  
Representatives from VFP Sons and Daughters Association  
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Maayong adlaw kaninyong tanan

It is a great honor for me to join you all today at the commemoration of the 80<sup>th</sup> Liberation Day of Davao.

Japan and Davao's strong friendship is deeply woven into the fabric of this city's history. In the early 1900s, many Japanese people migrated to Davao to engage in the production of Abaca. During this period, Davao became home to the largest Japanese community in Southeast Asia, with numbers reaching over 20,000.

I stand here with profound reverence. Facing our shared history squarely and reflecting on the bravery of those who made the ultimate deeds and sacrifices during the war are the very foundations of our future-oriented relationship. To Filipino veterans, I extend my sincerest respect to each one of you, whose unwavering dedication and service played a crucial role for the peace, prosperity, stability and dignity of this great nation.

We, the Japanese people, carry within our hearts the fervent understanding that the peace and prosperity we treasure today are built upon the magnanimity and benevolence graciously extended to us by the Filipino people.

This spirit of compassion has been the cornerstone of our reconciliation. It continues to guide our future-oriented partnership. From our past struggles to our present endeavors, countless individuals across various sectors of society in both countries have worked tirelessly to rebuild trust and foster an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

Since 1966, Japan has proudly been the largest Official Development Assistance (ODA) donor to the Philippines, actively supporting sustainable growth through numerous initiatives across various areas of cooperation.

Just a few days ago, The Davao City Bypass Construction Project's ceremonial tunnel breakthrough marks a significant milestone in addressing Davao City's severe traffic congestion. This project, a collaboration between the DPWH, the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Philippines, and JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency, promises to significantly reduce travel time and improve logistics in the region.

In addition to this Bypass construction, through Japan's Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Human Security Projects (GGP), Japan is helping empower local communities to address critical human security needs. Ultimately, contributing to a more sustainable and prosperous Davao and Mindanao as a whole.

Through the years, Japan has remained steadfast in supporting the Mindanao Peace Process. Supporting efforts for lasting peace through development assistance, peacebuilding initiatives, and dialogue facilitation. Recognizing that peace and prosperity in Davao and Mindanao are vital not only to the region but to the entire Philippines.

For the past 80 years, Japan has proudly and unwaveringly followed the path of a peace-loving nation. Japan is determined to never allow the devastation of war to be repeated ever again. We will continue to make every possible effort, seizing every opportunity to safeguard peace and securing its lasting impact for both present and future generations.

Japan, the Philippines, and the United States, once divided by conflict, now stand united as allies and partners. We are not only

committed to be working closely bilaterally, but also to deepening our trilateral cooperation. This is an enduring achievement that holds far-reaching significance. We are now working hand-in-hand, strengthening our robust partnership to foster global peace and prosperity. Through sustained dialogue, our three nations have also forged a deeper, unbreakable bond of friendship.

I believe in our shared ability to carry our friendship forward, growing stronger with each passing generation. Whether in times of challenge or moments of peace, Japan remains resolute in its dedication to our shared future.

Next year marks the 70th anniversary of the normalization of the Philippine-Japan diplomatic relations. I am deeply committed to exerting all my humble efforts to ensure that this historic occasion further strengthens the bond between our nations, together with all the partners and friends present here today, whose support and collaboration are vital to realizing our shared future.

Once again, my deepest respect and sincere gratitude to all the veterans who fought for the peace of our nations and the world. Now, it is our responsibility to honor their legacy by further strengthening these bonds and by ensuring the values they fought for endure for generations to come.

*Mabuhay ang pagkakaibigan ng Japan at Pilipinas!*  
*Mabuhay ang ating Trilateral Partnership!*  
*Daghang salamat kaninyong tanan.*