

**Policy Speech at the Joint Session
of the Philippine Senate and the House of Representatives
Heart-to-heart ties for the Next Generation**

November 4, 2023 11:00 - 11:30 (@House of the Representatives)

1 Introduction

Honorable Juan Miguel F. Zubiri, President of the Senate of the Republic of the Philippines,

Honorable Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of the Philippines,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat.

The Philippines, with the second largest population among ASEAN countries and more than 300,000 citizens living in Japan, is an irreplaceable partner for Japan. I am honored to have the opportunity to be the first Japanese Prime Minister to speak here at the Congress of the Philippines, which has a long tradition.

In 1977, former Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda delivered a speech in Manila in the presence of President Ferdinand Edralin Marcos, Sr. I am reminded that in the speech, he expressed his desire to build a heart-to-heart relationship of trust with South East Asia including the Philippines, as equal partners.

A half century has passed since then. Exchanges between our two countries have deepened, and today, the relationship between Japan and the Philippines is stronger than ever.

Looking back over the long history of our bilateral relationship, it has not always been smooth sailing. We cannot forget the endeavor of our predecessors based on the spirit of tolerance, including the pardon of Japanese war criminals by President Quirino in 1953, which paved the way for our two countries to overcome difficult times and build the friendly relationship we enjoy today.

Today, Japan-Philippines relations have reached the point of being called a “golden age.” This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the friendship and cooperation between

Japan and ASEAN, and in December, we will host a commemorative summit meeting in Tokyo.

Against this backdrop, I am very delighted to have the opportunity to visit Manila for the first time as Prime Minister and to express my views on Japan's foreign policy, including strengthening relations with the Philippines and ASEAN.

2 Japan's Efforts to Address Challenges of the International Community: the Importance of the Philippines and ASEAN

Ladies and gentlemen,

The international community is currently at a historic turning point, and the international order based on the rule of law that we have taken for granted is under serious threat. The international community is also facing complex and interrelated challenges such as climate change and infectious diseases. Under these circumstances, we cannot afford to have the world be divided based on ideologies and values.

At the G7 Summit in Hiroshima in May this year, which I had the honor to chair, I listened to the diverse voices of the international community, including those of the countries referred to as the "Global South." What I strongly felt there was the need to return to the very basic foundation that everyone can share. What I emphasize as such a foundation is the idea of "human dignity."

There is no better place to stress the significance of "human dignity" than here in the Philippine Congress. The Constitution of the Philippines stipulates that the Congress shall give highest priority to protecting and enhancing the rights of all people to "human dignity".

In order for everyone to live with dignity, it is essential to build a peaceful and stable world. From this standpoint, I confirmed with President Marcos during his visit to Japan in February that we would work together to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Furthermore, during my visit to the U.S. in January, I expressed my strong determination to defend a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)." Also in March, I announced a new plan to realize the FOIP. Underlying this plan is our determination to lead the international

community toward cooperation rather than division and confrontation, and to defend “freedom” and “the rule of law” at all costs.

Today, I stand here to share with you my renewed commitment to further advance these efforts and to share with you my thoughts on how to do so.

There are “four pillars” in the new FOIP plan. The first of these pillars is to uphold “principles for peace and rules for prosperity.” This is the idea of building “peace” by confirming and promoting the basic principles that the international community should uphold.

For example, stability in the Mindanao region is linked to peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. From this perspective, Japan has supported the peace process and economic development over the past two decades. We just announced yesterday in our meeting with President Marcos, the provision of heavy equipment for disaster management in Mindanao. This cooperation is based on the vision of the FOIP.

3 The 50th Anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation

Ladies and gentlemen,

Fifty years ago, Japan has initiated dialogue with ASEAN ahead of the rest of the world. Since then, Japan and ASEAN have helped each other in times of difficulty and nurtured a relationship of trust with a heart-to-heart connection through exchanges among peoples in a wide range of fields and at various levels.

One of the lessons learned from this experience is the second pillar of the new FOIP plan, “addressing challenges in an Indo-Pacific way.” This is the idea of addressing global challenges in a realistic and practical manner, and enhancing resilience and sustainability of each country as an equal partner.

For example, COVID-19 expanded divisions and disparities in the international community. It is evident that the world as a whole must respond to international health challenges. Japan will support the ASEAN Centre for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies to develop as a regional center of excellence.

Japan will also promote the third pillar of the new FOIP plan, which is to strengthen

“multi-layered connectivity.” Needless to say, ASEAN is one of the priority regions in overcoming vulnerabilities by strengthening the linkages among countries.

Japan will promote cooperation in line with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), which resonates with the FOIP. We will work with ASEAN to ensure that many countries support and cooperate for the principles and activities set forth in the AOIP, such as openness, transparency, inclusiveness, and a rules-based framework.

In the G7 Hiroshima Leaders’ Communiqué, Japan led the way in strongly articulating our commitment to strengthen coordination with ASEAN, to support ASEAN centrality and unity, and to promote cooperation in line with the AOIP.

In March, Japan announced a new contribution of US\$100 million to the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). In addition, in September, Japan launched the “Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative” to strengthen connectivity in both tangible and intangible fronts. We will also mobilize private-sector funds to support ASEAN’s resilience and sustainability.

In the commemorative summit meeting in December, we will jointly formulate a vision to create a new era of sustainable and prosperous development together, while building “trust” for the next generation.

4 Progress in Japan-Philippines Relations

(1) From a “Golden Age” to New Heights

Ladies and gentlemen,

Japan and the Philippines have strengthened their relationship at all levels in recent years. In 2016, which marked the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations, then Their Majesties Emperor and Empress of Japan visited the Philippines.

In February this year, President Marcos, together with President of the Senate Zubiri and Speaker of the House of Representatives Romualdez, visited Japan.

In addition, various exchanges and cooperation between the two countries are underway, such as visit of members of the Japan-Philippines Parliamentarians’ Friendship League to the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines this summer. Now I would like to introduce some specific examples of our cooperation.

(2) Security and Defense Cooperation

First, security and defense cooperation.

The last pillar of the New FOIP Plan is “extending efforts for security and safe use of the sea to the air.” Japan has hitherto provided 12 ships to the Coast Guard to play a part in improving the Philippines’ maritime security capability. Furthermore, a Japanese firm delivered a warning and control radar to the Philippine Air Force last month in order to improve Air Domain Awareness.

Also yesterday, Japan agreed with the Philippines to provide coastal surveillance radars to the Philippine Navy as the first cooperation project in the world under Japan’s newly established Official Security Assistance (OSA) this year. Japan will continue to contribute to the enhancement of the Philippines’ security capabilities, thereby contributing to regional peace and stability.

Furthermore, we concurred with President Marcos to commence formal negotiations on a Japan-Philippines reciprocal access agreement (RAA). Japan intends to further deepen strategic cooperation with the Philippines in the future.

(3) Economy and Investment

Next, I would like to touch upon cooperation in the areas of economy and investment.

Japan is the largest donor to the Philippines. Through the 600 billion yen public-private assistance announced in February which runs through March next year, we will continue to support economic and social development, in line with President Marcos’ “Build Better More” program.

For example, the construction of the Philippines’ first subway system is underway in Manila with Japanese assistance. I am going to visit the construction site later today. I am proud of the fact that Japan can play a part in this subway project, which is said to be a 50-year dream.

Furthermore, Japan is one of the largest investors in the Philippines on a private-sector basis. Public-private partnerships and investments in companies that contribute to decarbonization are also underway. The public and private sectors are eagerly working

together to support the economic growth of the Philippines.

We welcome the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation in the field of Tourism. We hope that through efforts such as the FIBA Basketball World Cup co-hosted by Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia this year, our "Golden Friendship" will lead to the next generation.

(4) Cooperation on Global Issues

Japan and the Philippines have also deepened coordination in addressing global issues.

As a native of Hiroshima, nuclear disarmament is my lifework. I will continue to promote realistic and practical efforts toward a "world without nuclear weapons." With this in mind, I am pleased that in September we were able to co-host the Commemorative High-Level Event on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) with Foreign Minister Manalo..

Regarding climate change, which the Marcos administration also attaches great importance to, we are deepening cooperation on energy transition through the realization of the "Asia Zero Emissions Community (AZEC)" concept. We will hold the AZEC summit meeting, and will work with participating countries to pursue the common goal of "Net Zero" via various pathways for energy transitions according to each country's circumstance.

(5) Strengthening Japan-Philippines-U.S. Cooperation

Lastly, I would like to offer a few words about the cooperation among Japan, the Philippines, and the U.S.

In order to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law, multilayered cooperation among allies and like-minded countries is crucial. In September, President Marcos, U.S. Vice President Harris, and I exchanged views for the first time and confirmed to enhance cooperation.

In the South China Sea, the trilateral cooperation to protect the freedom of the sea is underway. In addition to the participation of Japan's Self-Defense Forces in the joint U.S.-Philippines exercises held last month, the first joint exercise by the coast guard agencies of the three countries was held in June this year. Through these efforts, let us protect the maritime order, which is governed by laws and rules, not by force.

5 Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I have mentioned, the relationship between Japan and the Philippines has made great strides over the past half century. I believe that the people-to-people connection is the bedrock of this relationship.

I offered flowers yesterday at the monument to Dr. José Rizal. Dr. Rizal, who had once stayed in Japan in his youth and had the opportunity to interact with Japanese people, envisioned that our two countries would one day engage in a full-fledged relationship.

Indeed, exchanges between the peoples of the two countries have been unwavering. After the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, the Philippines sent a medical assistance team, and Filipino caregiver candidates remained in the affected areas to provide dedicated care, saying, “We cannot abandon the elderly people.”

In return, when Typhoon Yolanda struck in 2013, Japanese people from the disaster-stricken area of Tohoku went to the Philippines to assist in the recovery and reconstruction efforts.

This kind of relationship is what former Prime Minister of Japan Fukuda articulated, a “heart to heart” relationship. I believe that it is the responsibility of those living in the present, to take the “heart-to-heart ties” established by our predecessors to new heights and pass them on to the next generation.

The slogan for the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation is “Golden Friendship, Golden Opportunities.” At the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting in December, I hope to work with President Marcos and other ASEAN leaders to ensure that the “golden friendship” between Japan and ASEAN will be a “golden opportunity” that leads to the next generation.

To friends of the Philippines, ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the warm hospitality upon my visit to the Philippines. I will continue to do my utmost to ensure that the strong

friendship between Japan and the Philippines will last and further develop in the future.

Thank you very much for your time today. Salamat po.