

# Envisioning the future of Japan-Philippines relations with President Marcos

By HAYASHI YOSHIMASA

I express my sincere congratulations to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on his inauguration as the 17th President of the Republic of the Philippines. It is my great honor to attend the presidential inauguration ceremony as the Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan, Kishida Fumio.



manufacturing. In addition, the Philippines is one of the most popular study-abroad destinations for Japanese students, while Filipino teachers also sustain English language education in Japan, both in classrooms and online. Furthermore, Mitakeumi, born in

the Philippines and raised with *sinigang*, has risen to the second-highest rank in the Japanese national martial art of sumo wrestling. Such levels of interactions are a testament to the strides that our two countries have made on people-to-people and cultural exchanges. I hope that people-to-people exchanges will serve as the bedrock for the post-COVID economic recovery that will be further advanced under President Marcos.

Thirdly, we must continue to work on bilateral security cooperation. In light of the increasingly severe regional security environment, Japan and the Philippines launched the Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting (“2+2”) this April, with four ministers concurring on strengthening security cooperation. Our two countries are Strategic Partners sharing common values and interests, such as the rule of law and democracy. I earnestly hope to see the bilateral security cooperation – with track records of defense equipment transfers, defense exchanges and joint exercises – advance under President Marcos’ leadership. Japan will also continue to contribute to the safety and stability of our surrounding waters through our projects for capability enhancement of the Philippine Coast Guard, including patrol vessels development.

Firstly, on economic development cooperation, Japan continues to be the Philippines’ largest export destination as well as its largest bilateral donor, covering 40 percent of the Philippines’ ODA portfolio. In particular, Japan’s contribution of one trillion yen (approximately P476 billion) in five years, pledged in January 2017, was fulfilled ahead of schedule; let me underscore that Japan delivers on its promises. For example, Japan has provided financial assistance for infrastructure development projects including the Metro Manila Subway, the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway and the Davao City Bypass, thereby contributing to the improvement of livelihood of the Filipino nation. Japan also assists safe, peaceful living in the Philippines through support to the police and disaster risk reduction measures. I would like to amplify such efforts in coordination with President Marcos’ administration to contribute to socioeconomic development of the Philippines.

Secondly, regarding people-to-people exchanges, with over 270,000 residents in Japan, Filipinos account for the fourth largest group of internationals in Japan. The number of Filipino visitors to Japan increased seven-fold in seven years leading up to 2019. Tourists’ entry to Japan, which was disrupted due to COVID-19, has been permitted again for participants in organized group tours since this month. I hope many more Filipinos will visit Japan.

Filipinos in Japan actively engage in a wide range of sectors. Overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Japan support the Japanese economy and the lives of Japanese people in various fields such as nursing care, agriculture and

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Japan and the Philippines have worked hand in hand together to overcome numerous difficulties. In the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, a Philippine medical assistance team came to the rescue. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan made available three million doses of vaccines and 120 billion yen (P57 billion) in financial support for the Philippines. Japan also extended emergency relief and humanitarian assistance of \$13 million to the areas affected by Typhoon Odette. “A friend in need is a friend indeed” – this old adage truly describes the relationship between our two countries so precisely.

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Hayashi Yoshimasa is Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.