

PH-JAPAN TIES CRUCIAL AS WORLD FACES 'TURNING POINT,' SAYS TOP TOKYO ENVOY

Tokyo's top diplomat underscored the need for stronger Japanese and Philippine cooperation to help "strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law," as she meets with Filipino counterparts for a key meeting in Manila that seeks to elevate bilateral relations, especially in the security and economic fronts.

In a statement released through the Japanese Embassy, Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa framed the 2nd Japan-Philippines Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting on July 8 as being crucial for "charting a path toward strategic synergy" between the two nations.

Kamikawa, her country's first female foreign minister in 20 years, noted how the relationship had "made remarkable progress in a wide array of areas," reaching a new high when Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Manila and addressed Congress in November 2023.

Kishida, she said, "expressed his determination to elevate the 'heart-to-heart ties' established

by our predecessors to new heights and pass them on to the next generation. The warm applause from the audience filling the hall demonstrated the depth of the ties between our two countries. I hope that my visit to the Philippines will further develop our bilateral relationship based on this solid foundation."

Troop access pact

High on the meeting's agenda is the draft Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) for holding joint military exercises on either country's soil. Last week, Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. said the RAA is expected to be signed in the meeting after seven months of negotiations.

Kamikawa said both sides had made steady progress toward the conclusion of RAA "as well as the provision of warning and control radars, coastal surveillance radars and large patrol vessels."

"It is very timely to review such progress and confirm



Yoko Kamikawa

ways forward for future cooperation at this '2+2' meeting. I look forward to fruitful discussion with (Philippine) Foreign Secretary Manalo and Defense Secretary Teodoro," she added.

"As the world faces a historic turning point, cooperation between our two countries—strategic partners, which are both

maritime nations and share fundamental values and principles—is essential to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law."

Citing substantive developments in economic cooperation, Kamikawa said Japan remained the Philippines' largest donor, its development support ranging from transportation infrastructure, such as the Metro Manila Subway Project and Metro Rail Transit (MRT) Line 3 Rehabilitation Project, to disaster management and the Mindanao peace process.

Women empowerment

"Japan will continue to help the Philippines achieve upper middle-income country status through such efforts. With more than 1,400 Japanese companies operating in the Philippines, Japan stands as a major trading partner for the country. Meanwhile, the Philippines plays an important role in supply chain resilience for Japan," she said.

Cultural and people-to-people exchanges continue to thrive, she said.

"In 2023, the number of Filipinos visiting Japan reached about 620,000, exceeding the prepandemic level. In addition, Filipino nurses and caregivers working under the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement and specified skilled workers are supporting Japan's economy."

Kamikawa said she would use her Manila visit to strengthen the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, calling it "my lifelong commitment."

The WPS, she said, is the pursuit of a more sustainable peace through participation of women in leadership positions, humanitarian and reconstruction efforts, and the protection of vulnerable groups in times of crisis.

The Japanese minister lauded the Philippines for being "proactive in women's empowerment, exemplified by the active roles of female legislators" and making "enormous strides

in the WPS, including developing a national action plan ahead of other Southeast Asian countries."

Important US alliance

To foster peace, stability and economic prosperity in the Philippines and the entire region, she said, "the relationship with the United States, an ally for both of our countries, is also important."

Recalling the first-ever Japan-Philippines-US Summit held in Washington in April, Kamikawa said the leaders of the three countries "discussed concrete directions for future cooperation primarily in the economic field and made achievements, such as launching the Luzon Economic Corridor, to enhance the regional connectivity. Discussions are already under way to bring these cooperation projects to fruition."

"During this visit, I wish to reaffirm the steady progress of trilateral collaboration," Kamikawa said.

Japan and the Philippines: Charting a path toward strategic synergy

By KAMIKAWA YOKO

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

Magandang araw, dear Filipino friends. It is my great pleasure to visit the Philippines as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Japan and the Philippines share a long history of exchange dating back to the 16th century. Especially over the past few years, Japan-Philippines relations have made remarkable progress in a wide array of areas, including security, the economy and cultural and people-to-people exchanges. In November 2023, Prime Minister Kishida visited Manila and addressed the Philippine Congress as the first Japanese Prime Minister ever. He expressed his determination to elevate the “heart-to-heart ties” established by our predecessors to new heights and pass them on to the next generation. The warm applause from the audience filling the hall demonstrated the depth of the ties between our two countries. I hope that my visit to the Philippines will further develop our bilateral relationship based on this solid foundation.

During my visit, the second Japan-Philippines Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting (“2+2”) will be held, following the first one in 2022. Japan and the Philippines are neighboring countries linked by the sea. As the world faces a historic turning point, cooperation between our two countries – strategic partners, which are both maritime nations and share fundamental values and principles – is essential to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Recently, Japan and the Philippines have been making steady progress in bilateral cooperation, including in work toward the conclusion of the Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) as well as the provision of warning and control radars, coastal surveillance radars and large patrol vessels. It is very timely to review such progress and confirm ways forward for future cooperation at this “2+2” meeting. I look forward to fruitful discussion with Foreign Secretary Manalo and Defense Secretary Teodoro.

There are substantive developments in economic cooperation as well. Japan is the Philippines’ largest donor and has supported its economic and social development in various areas, ranging from the development of transportation infrastructure, such as the Metro Manila Subway Project and Metro Rail Transit (MRT) Line 3 Rehabilitation Project, to disaster management and the Mindanao peace process. Japan will continue to help the Philippines achieve upper middle-income country status through such efforts. With more than 1,400 Japanese companies operating in the Philippines, Japan stands as a major trading partner



for the country.

Meanwhile, the Philippines plays an important role in supply chain resilience for Japan. Our two countries will leverage each other’s strengths and thereby enhance coordination as partners for mutual growth.

Cultural and people-to-people exchanges are also thriving. In 2023, the number of Filipinos visiting Japan reached about 620,000, exceeding the pre-pandemic level. In addition, Filipino nurses and caregivers working under the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement and specified skilled workers are supporting Japan’s economy. Athletes who have roots in both countries gain fame in golf and baseball, and Japanese *anime* and *manga* enjoy popularity in the Philippines. These ties form the foundation of bilateral relations, and I will focus on furthering discussion to build up cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

I would also like to further strengthen cooperation with the Philippines in the “Women, Peace and Security (WPS),” which is my lifelong commitment. The WPS is an idea to pursue a more sustainable peace through “participation” of women in leadership positions in “prevention” and “humanitarian and reconstruction assistance,” while at the same time working on “protection” of vulnerable groups such as women in times of crisis. The Philippines has been proactive in women’s empowerment, exemplified by the active roles of female legislators, and has made enormous strides in the WPS, including developing a national action plan ahead of other Southeast Asian countries. I would like to seize this opportunity to deepen my understanding on the Philippines’ initiatives and further reinforce coordination between our two countries.

From the perspective of fostering peace, stability and economic prosperity in the Philippines and this entire region, the relationship with the United States, an ally for both of our countries, is also important. In April, the first-ever Japan-Philippines-US Summit was held in the United States. The three leaders discussed concrete directions for future cooperation primarily in the economic field and made achievements, such as launching the Luzon Economic Corridor, to enhance the regional connectivity. Discussions are already underway to bring these cooperation projects to fruition. During this visit, I wish to reaffirm the steady progress of trilateral collaboration.

The year 2026 will mark the 70th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines. With this significant milestone in mind, I am determined to further deepen relations with the Philippines across a broad range of fields as Japan’s Foreign Minister.

Japan and the Philippines: Charting a path toward strategic synergy

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Japan and the Philippines share a long history of exchange dating back to the 16th century. Especially over the past few years, Japan-Philippines relations have made remarkable progress in a wide array of areas, including security, the economy, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges. In November 2023, Prime Minister Kishida visited Manila and addressed the Philippine Congress as the first Japanese Prime Minister ever. He expressed his determination to elevate the "heart-to-heart ties" established by our predecessors to new heights and pass them on to the next generation. The warm applause from the audience filling the hall demonstrated the depth of the ties between our two countries. I hope that my visit to the Philippines will further develop our bilateral relationship based on this solid foundation.

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