

70 years of relations woven in trust: Towards the further deepening of Japan-Philippines relations

By JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER MOTEGI TOSHIMITSU

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Japan. I am deeply honored to visit the Philippines as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan at the beginning of this commemorative year. I wish this year to be a good one for all of you in the Philippines and would like to emphasize that Japan always stands by the Philippines as your close friend.

The theme of the 70th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations is "Weaving the Future Together: Peace, Prosperity, Possibilities." I am determined not only to celebrate the trust and friendship between our two nations, built through future-oriented perspectives, but also to further strengthen Japan's special ties with the Philippines and promote concrete cooperation projects, for the sake of peace and prosperity of our two countries and the region. Based on these considerations, I chose to visit the Philippines as one of my first overseas destinations this year.

Amid a regional security environment growing increasingly severe and complex and with the entire international order wavering, the geopolitical importance of Southeast Asia, a pivotal region in the Indo-Pacific, continues to rise. In such circumstances, cooperation between Japan and the Philippines which are neighbors connected by the sea and "Strategic Partners" sharing values and principles is crucial.

In the security field, the Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) entered into force last year.

The RAA has already been utilized in concrete cooperative activities between the two countries, including joint exercises and the transport of relief supplies following the earthquake offshore of Cebu Province, achieving smooth cooperation.

Going forward, Japan is continuing its efforts to enhance interoperability with the Philippines and support enforcing its capabilities, including through establishing a legal framework for the settlement procedures for the reciprocal provision of supplies and services as well as providing Japanese-made defense equipment and infrastructure support through Official Security Assistance (OSA). We also intend to strengthen trilateral cooperation with our common ally, the United States.

In the economic sphere, Japan is contributing to strengthening the Philippines' economy and infrastructure, including through initiatives on disaster management, securing sea routes, the development of transportation and communication infrastructure and agricultural assistance through Official Development Assistance (ODA), guided by the belief that such measures will also contribute to regional peace and stability.

For example, Japan is promoting a channel improvement project for the Pasig-Marikina River, which runs through the Manila metropolitan area, as a flood control measure for the city. From an eco-



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conomic security perspective, we wish to strengthen cooperation between our two countries in enhancing the resilience of supply chains, including those for critical minerals, and in areas such as information and communications, and AI.

Furthermore, the Philippines is serving as the ASEAN Chair this year. Japan is committed to supporting the Philippines' leadership in addressing various issues in the international community and the region.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" initiative. FOIP shares essential principles with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), including the rule of law. While continuing to cherish these principles, as a "Trusted Partner" of ASEAN, Japan will continue to advance cooperation to make both Japan and ASEAN stronger and more prosperous.

For example, in addition to cooperation in new fields such as AI, we will also pursue collaboration through the Asia Zero-Emission Community (AZEC) with a view to simultaneously achieving decarbonization, economic growth and energy security in Asia.

Finally, and most importantly, the foundation of the development of Japan-Philippines cooperative relations that I have just mentioned lies in people-to-people exchanges.

The Philippines has become one of the most popular travel destinations for Japanese people, with over 400,000 visitors from Japan to the Philippines recorded by November last year.

Furthermore, at last year's Expo 2025 in Osaka, Kansai, Japan, the Philippine Pavilion proved immensely popular. It captivated visitors with Philippine culture and craftsmanship.

This year, various events commemorating the 70th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations are planned in both countries. We hope these occasions will lead to deeper mutual understanding and further boost the friendly relations between our two nations.

Through this visit, as Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, I am determined to devote my full efforts to further deepening Japan-Philippines relations across a wide range of fields and to making the bonds between our two nations even stronger.

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In the economic sphere, Japan is contributing to strengthening the Philippines' economy and infrastructure, including through initiatives on disaster management, securing sea routes, the development of transportation and communication infrastructure, and agricultural assistance through the Official Development Assistance, guided by the belief that such measures will also contribute to regional peace and stability. For example, Japan is promoting a channel improvement project for the Pasig-Marikina River, which runs through the Manila metropolitan area, as a flood control measure for the city. From an economic security perspective, we wish to strengthen cooperation between our two countries in enhancing the resilience of supply chains including those for critical minerals, and in areas such as information and communications, and artificial intelligence (AI).

Furthermore, the Philippines is serving as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) chair this year. Japan is committed to supporting the Philippines' leadership in addressing

various issues in the international community and the region. This year marks the 10th anniversary of Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific initiative. FOIP shares essential principles with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, including the rule of law. While continuing to cherish these principles, as a "trusted partner" of ASEAN, Japan will continue to advance cooperation to make both Japan and ASEAN stronger and more prosperous. For example, in addition to cooperation in new fields such as AI, we will also pursue collaboration through the Asia Zero Emission Community with a view to simultaneously achieving decarbonization, economic growth, and energy security in Asia.

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Motegi Toshimitsu is Japan's minister for foreign affairs.

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