

**TOAST AND REMARKS OF  
HIS EXCELLENCY BENIGNO S. AQUINO III  
PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES  
AT THE STATE BANQUET HOSTED BY THEIR MAJESTIES  
IMPERIAL PALACE, TOKYO  
JUNE 3, 2015**

Your Majesties, Your Excellency Prime Minister Abe and Madam Abe, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of my delegation, allow me to convey my profound appreciation and gratitude to Their Majesties for the welcome you have given us. Your gracious hospitality honors not only our delegation, but the entire Filipino nation and the friendship between our two countries.

When Your Majesties traveled to Philippine shores in 1962, you met with our post-war generation of leaders. In those days, the Philippines was thought to be only second to Japan, whether in terms of economic growth or in sports. That journey gave you the opportunity to visit places of great significance to Philippine history: Malacañan Palace, where Your Majesty the Emperor was conferred the Order of Sikatuna, and General Emilio Aguinaldo's residence in Cavite, where the Filipino people first proclaimed their independence and where you were thus able to meet with our first president and his wife.

Many years afterward, in 1986, I had the privilege of accompanying my mother President Corazon C. Aquino on her first visit to Japan. Your father, the late Emperor Showa—a person of unquestioned historical importance—even deigned to converse with an

obscure citizen like myself. I was struck by the simplicity and sincerity of his tone as he reminded me to take care of my mother—something that my own father had told me when I was thirteen years old, in what we thought was the last time we would ever speak. On that occasion, the late Emperor Showa spoke a truism in telling me to care for my parents, but his warmth made me feel as if I were not a stranger.

This was the first and only meeting we would ever have, and yet the memories of our trip to Japan have stayed with me all these years, not only for the kindness Your Majesty's family showed us, but also for the ardent support that Japan showed for the Philippines and my mother's government. After all, at the time, my country was a newly-reclaimed democracy, eager to rebuild our institutions and our economy. The support of Japan was a vote of confidence in this endeavor. Then, as today, we Filipinos have always treasured our democracy, and valued the friendship of those who have stood by it.

In the decades that have passed since those visits, both the Philippines and Japan have not remained idle; indeed, we have been given the chance to know each other closely. The pain and tragedy of the past have been healed by Japan's commitment to a relationship based on mutual respect, dignity, and solidarity. For 59 years, our two nations have demonstrated that we can work together for our advancement and mutual benefit.

Tonight, I am here in Tokyo as the leader of the Filipino nation, proud friends and partners of the Japanese people—the representative of a nation that has rediscovered its optimism and confidence. As we embark on deepening our decades-long relations to take our friendship and partnership to new heights, I appreciate this opportunity to share with you the significant gains my country has made.

From the beginning, my administration has worked to make the fruits of economic growth felt by all. The success we have enjoyed so far has been anchored on an unrelenting commitment to good governance and the backing of the Filipino people, who recognize that the path of integrity, honesty, and true public service is the path that can help us to realize all our aspirations.

At the same time, we are aware that our gains became possible, in part, due to the support of our international partners. In Japan and its people, we have found steadfast partners and friends in the truest sense of the word: from our economic interactions, to our shared commitment to peace and development in Mindanao; from our people-to-people exchanges, to the aid we have given each other during calamities, to our shared advocacy of peace and the rule of law.

Your Majesties, in the Philippines, friendships are not restricted to a single lifetime: they are cross-generational, in which long-standing relationships between parties are treasured and preserved. The relations between our two countries have blossomed into a deep and abiding

friendship, and a strategic partnership that will serve our peoples well. I say this with full confidence, because ours is a relationship founded on shared values: the importance we give to democracy, the unflagging strength of Filipinos and the Japanese, and our dedication to uplifting the lives of all our peoples, under the auspices of “achieving peace everywhere.”

It is in this spirit, with deepest appreciation for your kindness and that of your family and of the Japanese people, that I thank Your Majesties, Your Excellencies, and all our distinguished guests for honoring the lasting friendship between our two countries.

**[BREAK FOR NATIONAL ANTHEMS]**

At this point, I would like to invite Your Majesties, Your Excellencies and our distinguished guests to raise your glasses in a toast:

May Your Majesties continue to be blessed with good health and success;

May the seeds of our relationship, replanted 59 years ago and nourished by the good will of the Filipino and Japanese peoples, bear even sweeter fruit in the decades to come;

And may the strategic partnership between the Philippines and Japan bring happiness, peace, and prosperity to our peoples.