

OPENING REMARKS¹

Mr. Kazushi Suzuki and company of the Japan International Cooperation Center, my colleagues from the government, and our friends from the private sector, good morning!

I take great pleasure to welcome you all to Davao City—the Philippines' gateway to Mindanao and the East ASEAN growth area. Over the years, we take pride that our city and regional center has earned various recognitions, such as the Most Livable City in the Philippines and 18th in the world from 1996-1999, as adjudged by the Asiaweek Magazine, the Most Peaceful City in Asia from 1998-2005, the Cleanest and Greenest City in the Philippines from 1999-2005, the Most Child Friendly City in the Philippines in 1999-2000, 2nd Place LGU Literacy Award in the Philippines in 1999, Most Outstanding Water Utility in Asia, 1996-1998, just to name a few.

As I acknowledge Davao City's virtues, let me also take this opportunity to cite the contributions of the government of our honored guests to our socioeconomic development. In Davao Region alone, Japan accounts for almost half of the foreign funding assistance received for ongoing infrastructure projects, amounting to P1.8 billion. Japan, likewise is the top destination of our export products, especially banana, for over three decades now.

To further strengthen the partnership of Japan and the people of Mindanao, the much awaited Japan Chamber of Commerce of Mindanao was inaugurated last March 31. This was seen as the fulfillment of the Japanese people's long time vision to contribute significantly in the improvement of Mindanao's economic environment. This also reaffirms Japan's continuing support to the Philippine Government's efforts to achieve genuine progress and lasting peace in Mindanao.

This morning, we are here for a very important activity --- the briefing on the Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resource Development Project Scholarship or JDS for academic year 2008-2009. The aim of

¹ Delivered by ARD Bonifacio G. Uy during the Briefing on the JDS held at the DPWH Arena Conference Room, Davao City on 23 August 2007.

this activity is to disseminate information on the JDS which is an Official Development Assistance program of the Japanese Government to support human resource development of the Philippines.

As in the past, it is always NEDA's pleasure to host this briefing because of its great impact on the capacity building of our people. The Japan Development Scholarship Project or the JDS gives us the opportunity to obtain master's degrees in various fields of study in Japanese universities.

In this regard, we would like to thank Mr. Suzuki and company for graciously coming over to Davao City to brief us on the guidelines of the JDS. We have made all efforts to invite as many participants from all regions in Mindanao and are happy to note that many have responded to our call this morning. We would like, in turn, to ask our partners from other regions who are here today to help disseminate information on the JDS in their respective areas, especially to the LGUs, the business sector and the academe.

We wish to inform you, however, that while NEDA has been tasked to facilitate the dissemination of the JDS, we no longer evaluate nominations for foreign scholarships. Last June 26, NEDA XI has formally turned over the screening of Mindanao nominees for foreign scholarships to the DepEd for basic education, CHED for higher education and TESDA for non-degree courses. This is pursuant to Executive Order No. 402 which abolished the Special Committee on Scholarship and transferred its functions to the above-mentioned agencies.

Once more, I would like to welcome everyone to this JDS briefing. Let us look forward to a very fruitful activity knowing that this will not only strengthen our efforts for nation-building, but also foster stronger ties between our two nations, the Philippines and Japan.

Thank you very much.