

**WELCOME SPEECH  
FOR AMBASSADOR MANUEL M. LOPEZ  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
PHILIPPINE COCONUT PROMOTION SEMINAR**

**6 November 2014**

*Multi- Purpose Hall, Philippine Embassy - Tokyo  
Speaking Slot: 1200H-1205H*

The Honorable Romulo Arancon, Jr., Administrator of the Philippine Coconut Authority,

Mr. Kousuke Asuma, Vice President of Cocowell Corporation,

Friends from the coconut industry from the Philippines and Japan,

Ladies and gentlemen, *minna sama, konnichi wa.*

One of the pillars I espouse as Philippine Ambassador to Japan is economic diplomacy promotion. Quite simply, we believe in working towards the creation of more business activity between the Philippines and Japan to enable higher productivity, added jobs and a wealth of opportunities for inclusive growth for our people.

There is still much that can be done in promoting trade between our countries, particularly in areas that will have substantial positive impact in the agricultural sector, which is still a major source of livelihood to a majority of Filipinos.

Our fertile land and tropical climate has showered our country with agricultural produce that can provide for a variety of food requirements and by-products for multiple applications. One of these produce in bountiful abundance in the Philippines is the coconut.

26% of the Philippines' agricultural land or around 3.85 million hectares is planted with coconut trees. The country has more than 300 million coconut trees that yield at least 43 nuts per tree per year. That translates to around 13 billion coconuts per annum. No wonder, the Philippines dominates the world as one of the biggest, if not the biggest supplier of coconuts.

I am certain that you are aware of the growing interest on the healthful benefits of the coconut water. In the US and Europe, active individuals have taken to drinking the coconut water to replenish fluids lost after exercise. Much of that is supplied by the Philippines.

Virgin coconut oil has been recognized for its therapeutic and even cosmetic properties and is now promoted heavily in lifestyle magazines and television programs in Japan.

A derivative of coconut fiber – the coco peat and coco coir has also been hailed for its environmental contributions as these have been effectively utilized including in the north of Japan to prevent soil erosion.

You might be interested to note that coconut fiber is now being used as alternative fiber to stuff beds, or tatamis.

Every part of the coconut can be used or transformed to provide man's basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing.

It is not surprising therefore that the coconut is commonly referred to as the tree of life. In the Philippines, especially in rural communities, one coconut tree in the backyard can be so empowering. A coconut tree symbolizes hope – that this tree will give your family nutrition, shelter, and other material benefits.

We would like to share with you the wonders of the coconut. From here perhaps, you will find opportunities for various applications in your diet, lifestyle and in your businesses.

I'm sure It will be an interesting afternoon. We have speakers and guests who can share with you more information on coconut spa products and processed coconut food items. We also have an operator of a "*hilot*" school and someone from a coconut café to share their use of coconut products.

After the seminar, do partake of the buffet of coconut-based dish, desserts and drinks. I am sure that after these, all of you would be raring to fly over to the Philippines to bask under the sun drinking your fresh coconut water under the shade of a real and authentic coconut tree in any of the more than 7000 beautiful islands of my country. Manila is just 4 hours away from Tokyo. I am also happy to share with you that more direct flights between Tokyo and Cebu are expected by March next year.

With that I welcome you all again to the Philippine Embassy for this Philippine Coconut Seminar. Have a great afternoon.

*Arigatou gozaimasu.*