



## Piloting Innovation for Pasig River Cleanup: Insights from the 6-month Clearbot Pilot Study in the Philippines

### Opening Remarks

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Chair / Co-Chair, Interagency Council for Pasig River Urban Development (IAC-PRUD)

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#### **Magandang umaga sa ating lahat.**

When we talk about rehabilitating the Pasig River, one word comes to mind: **bayanihan**.

Bayanihan is about moving together, with shared purpose, shared responsibility, and shared commitment. And that spirit of bayanihan is exactly what brings us together today.

Let me begin by thanking the **Asian Development Bank** for organizing this culminating activity and for being a consistent and forward-looking partner in the rehabilitation of the Pasig River.

I would also like to acknowledge our partners who are with us today: the **Department of Environment and Natural Resources**, the **Metropolitan Manila Development Authority**, **Department of Interior and Local Government**, **Philippine Coast Guard**, other national agencies, our partner **local governments**, our private-sector and civil-society partners including **Ayala Foundation**, Clear Robotics, and our colleagues across government who continue to work, often behind the scenes, to help restore the Pasig River.

Your presence today sends a clear message: **the Pasig River is no longer the responsibility of one agency or one sector: it is a shared national effort.**

Before we go further, I'd like to note an important milestone from just yesterday. Together with our partners, we marked another step forward in our Pasig River journey with the turnover and activation of the vendor kiosks along the Pasig River Esplanade—an effort strongly championed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and First Lady Liza Marcos under the "Bigyang Buhay Muli ang Ilog Pasig" program. This milestone reflects our shared commitment to reclaiming the Pasig River as a vibrant, active public space for all Filipinos. I invite everyone—when you have the chance—to visit and walk along the Pasig River Esplanade, bring your families, enjoy the open spaces and kiosks, and experience firsthand how the Pasig river is being returned to the Filipino people.

We are gathered here today not only to conclude a pilot project, but to reflect on how far our collaboration has come, and how much more we can still achieve together.

For many years, efforts along the Pasig River were often fragmented: cleanups in one area, planning in another, and initiatives that did not always connect. What we are seeing now is a shift: from isolated actions to **integrated solutions**, from short-term fixes to **long-term transformation**, and from simply cleaning a river to **reimagining the role of the river in our cities**.

This is the spirit behind the **Pasig River Urban Development agenda**, and it is the approach we are committed to advancing.

We value our partnership with ADB because it reflects this integrated way of working. Under the **Rejuvenating Pasig River for a Livable Manila, or REPALM initiative**, ADB's support has gone beyond pilots and studies. It has helped us connect the dots: between river rehabilitation, public space, digital innovation, and long-term decision-making.

One important area of collaboration is **public space planning along the Pasig River corridor**, particularly in **Makati, Mandaluyong, and Pasig City**. These cities sit at the heart of Metro Manila. Reimagining public spaces along the river is not just about beautification, it is about giving communities safe and inclusive open spaces, reconnecting people to the river, and allowing the Pasig River to once again serve as a backbone of urban life.

At the same time, we worked with ADB, DENR, MMDA, and other government agencies, on **digital innovation**, including the **Pasig River Digital Twin**. For a river system as complex as Pasig, data matters. Digital tools allow us to see problems more clearly, test solutions before scaling them, and ensure that investments are targeted and effective over the long term.

This is where the **Clearbot pilot** plays an important role. From OPAPRR's perspective, its value is not only in the waste collected. Its real value lies in how it complements the work of LGUs,

MMDA, and communities, improves safety and efficiency on the river, and generates real-time data that can inform smarter planning and decision-making.

We were especially encouraged to present these integrated efforts—public space planning, digital innovation, and Clearbot—to **President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and the First Lady, during the inauguration of Phase IV of the Pasig River Esplanade in October last year**. Their support reaffirmed that Pasig River rehabilitation is a priority of this administration, and that innovation and partnerships are central to accelerating progress.

As we conclude this pilot, our focus is clearly on what comes next: ensuring that lessons from pilots inform policy, that data guides investments, and that partnerships continue to deepen.

Rehabilitating the Pasig River will not happen overnight. But through **bayanihan**, through strong partnerships, and through smart and inclusive solutions, we are steadily moving forward.

Our goal is not just a cleaner river, but a **Pasig River that supports livable communities, resilient cities, and a better quality of life for generations of Filipinos**.

**Maraming salamat po, at magandang umaga!**