



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

Welcome Remarks for PHCO CD Andrew Jeffries

Good Morning, Everyone, and Welcome to ADB.

It's a pleasure to join you today as we mark the conclusion of the six-month Clearbot pilot study under ADB's **Rejuvenating Pasig River for a Livable Manila**, or **REPALM** initiative.

Let me begin by acknowledging our partners and colleagues who have made this work possible:

- The **Inter-Agency Council for Pasig River Urban Development**, led by the **Office of the Presidential Adviser on Pasig River Rehabilitation (OPARR)**, represented by [Assistant Secretary Melissa Aradanias] **and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA)**,
- **Department of Environment and Natural Resources**, represented by [Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, and International Affairs Jonas Leones];
- Partners from **national and local governments**;

- Our private-sector partner **Clear Robotics**;
- Ayala Foundation, community partners and river champions;
- And colleagues from **ADB**.

The Vision for Pasig River "The Pasig River is more than just a waterway; it is a pulse point for Metro Manila. It dictates how people move, where they work, and the very quality of life for the millions living along its banks. If we get this right—if we restore its health—this river can once again become a vibrant corridor for transport, tourism, and economic growth, making our cities truly livable for the people who depend on them."

Rehabilitating the Pasig is not just about a one-time cleanup. It requires an **integrated river basin approach**—a strategy that bridges policy reform, technology, and community action. This is the cornerstone of our support for the Government of the Philippines' **Pasig River Urban Development (PRUD)** program."

ADB's Multi-Level Strategy "At ADB, we are attacking this challenge from three distinct angles:

- **First, at the Policy Level:** Through our **Blue Economy Policy-Based Loan**, we are driving reforms to strengthen plastic and solid waste management systems. Crucially, we are also preparing **downstream recycling investments** to tackle pollution at its source before it ever reaches the water.
- **Second, at the Systems Level:** We are investing in digital innovation. By leveraging **digital twinning technologies** for the Pasig River, we can use data to pinpoint pollution hotspots and flood risks, ensuring every peso of intervention is spent where it has the greatest impact.
- **And third, at the Operational Level:** We are testing practical, scalable technologies like **Clearbot**."

The Clearbot Pilot: Lessons from the Field "Over the past six months, we have seen this technology in action across two critical tributaries.

In the **Ilugin River**, in partnership with **Mayor Vico Sotto and Pasig City**, we launched our pilot in October 2025. Since then, Clearbot vessels have cleared over 6,300 square meters and removed 100 tons of water hyacinth. This isn't just about aesthetics; it has restored water flow, reduced flood risks, and mitigated health hazards like dengue for the surrounding communities.

In the **San Juan River**, launched in December 2025 with **Mayor Francis Zamora**, the focus shifted to solid waste. We have intercepted nearly 3 tons of trash while gathering vital data on waste patterns—data that is essential for long-term planning."

The Spirit of Collaboration "But beyond the tons of waste collected, these pilots have taught us what it takes to scale. We've learned what works, what needs adjustment, and how technology must fit into the broader urban waste agenda.

Just as vital as the technology itself is the spirit in which it was deployed. The progress we see today is a testament to the '**Bayanihan sa Esteros**'—a deep collaboration between national and local government, the private sector, ADB, and the communities themselves. Innovation only truly takes root when it is met with strong governance and local ownership."

Moving Forward "Today's session is about honest learning. We are here to discuss the challenges and the clear lessons that will inform future scaling up efforts. Our goal is to move from pilot to permanent impact, unlocking the Pasig River's full potential.

Rejuvenating this historic river will not happen overnight. But as Clearbot has shown us, progress is possible when we test, learn, and act together. ADB remains fully committed to this journey with the Philippine government and all our partners.

Thank you, and I look forward to a productive and insightful exchange today.