

Remarks by H.E. Mr. Hiroshi AZUMA,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan
to the Portuguese Republic

Lisbon, 3 March 2016

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, it is a great honour for me to welcome all of you to my residence tonight for celebrating our cooperation to enhance tourism both in Japan and Portugal.

During the last two years, we have witnessed the development of our bilateral relations in the broad range of fields including tourism, based upon the enhanced friendship promoted by the mutual visits of the Prime-Ministers of Japan and Portugal.

The Government of Japan has put a great deal of effort in promoting a Tourism-Oriented country, and is targeting 20 million foreign visitors by 2020, the year of Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. Last year, we received more than 19.7 million foreign visitors, which was a large increase almost double in two years. We are already closer to our goal.

The number of visitors from Portugal to Japan in 2015 increased by about 30% compared to the previous year. As I promised you at Japan Tourism Seminar last year, Japan is participating in BTL this year. Yesterday at BTL, I met the Prime-Minister, H.E. Mr. António Costa, and the Minister of Economy, H.E. Mr. Manuel Caldeira Cabral and the Secretary of State for Tourism, H.E. Ms. Ana Mendes Godinho, visited the booth of Japan and had the opportunity to wear the traditional Japanese cloth, Yukata. I hope more Portuguese will visit our booth there first and visit Japan in the future.

Visitors from Japan to Portugal, on the other hand, has been increasing, too. In 2014, the number of Japanese visitors was about 89,000. As Japanese Ambassador to Portugal, I am very glad to receive many Japanese people to this beautiful country, Portugal.

To take this opportunity, I would like to refer to the International Conference for the European Association for Japanese Studies which will be held in Lisbon at the end of August next year. This is a large scale conference that academics and researchers from Europe, Japan and all over the world join together. I believe this would be a very good opportunity not only to promote academic and cultural exchange between Japan and Portugal, but also to promote Portugal to foreign countries.

In closing, I would like to thank JNTO, Japan National Tourism Organization, and other relevant Japanese companies to participate in BTL, and also thank everyone present here to support continually the Embassy's efforts to promote the bilateral relations.

Thank you very much. Muito obrigado.