

Recepção de despedida do Embaixador Hiroshi Azuma

A 11 de Outubro, realizou-se a recepção de despedida do Embaixador Hiroshi Azuma, na sua Residência, no Restelo.

Participaram, nessa recepção, variadas pessoas convidadas com quem o Embaixador manteve contactos durante a sua missão diplomática. O Embaixador Azuma, na sua saudação de despedida, manifestou um grande agradecimento à amizade e ao apoio prestados ao longo de quatro anos de serviço em Portugal, e realçou o desenvolvimento, cada vez maior, das relações entre ambos os países, em anos recentes, em todas as áreas, particularmente no intercâmbio de pessoas e nos assuntos económicos. Reforçou, também, uma imensa expectativa por um futuro ainda mais promissor nos anos vindouros. Seguem as palavras de saudação do Embaixador Hiroshi Azuma:





Speech by H. E. Mr. Hiroshi AZUMA,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Portugal,
at his farewell reception

on 11th October 2017, at the Residence

Dear friends,

Time flies when you have fun. I have had wonderful 4 years, with full of excitement and adventures, since I arrived in Lisbon on October 8th, 2013.

It has been the greatest privilege of my life to serve as a Japanese Ambassador to the land of our historical friend. I'd like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to the people of Portugal for taking me into their heart, and allowing me to be part of the joint endeavor to promote and strengthen such a friendship. I'm also grateful to the colleagues of the Diplomatic Corp for sharing with

me many precious moments and exciting ideas. I also want to thank all friends of the Japanese community for inspiring me to believe even more strongly that there is a vast potential in our bilateral relationship. Finally, I'd like to extend my gratitude to the staffs of the Japanese Embassy for their dedication, and for helping me to better understand Portugal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you all know, Japan has a long history with Portugal. Portuguese were the first European to arrive in Japan, introducing new culture and civilization, producing a dramatic impact on the course of our history. So, we all learn about their arrival to Japan in 1543 at schools, and many of us feel special proximity to Portuguese.

At first, I wasn't sure if there are any rooms for me to improve such a relationship. Well, fortunately, I was wrong. In fact, I had an opportunity to witness one of the most exciting moments in the history of our bilateral relationship.

Soon after my arrival to Lisbon, Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Shinzo Abe, decided to make an official visit to Portugal in May 2014, becoming the first incumbent Japanese Prime Minister to visit this country. Likewise, Dr. Passos Coelho, then Prime Minister of Portugal visited Japan in March 2015, becoming the first Portuguese Prime Minister to visit us in 25 years.

These visits, along with the commitment of continuity clearly confirmed later by the Administration of Dr. Antonio Costa, and the President Dr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, had opened the new horizon in our bilateral relations. For example, it has been identified "Oceans" and "Portuguese language" as the new frontiers of our cooperation. We were connected through the oceans during The Age of Discovery, and the both nations are surrounded by the sea. These facts offer vast potentials of cooperation to be discovered mutually. At the same time, there are about three hundred Portuguese words incorporated in

Japanese language, and there are estimated 1.9 million NIKKEI in Brazil, allowing us to push our cooperation beyond the bilateral context, and approaching together to the CPLP countries. Therefore, I was very pleased when Japan had become its observer member in July, 2017.

Naturally, it also created momentum in other areas of the relationship. I was very fascinated to see that many Portuguese companies are now making a great effort themselves to increase the sales of wine, olive oils, pork, chicken, taking advantage of new opportunities in the Japanese market. I know for the fact that these high quality products will have success in our market, in addition, I'm sure that the Japan EU Economic Partnership Agreement, that have been politically agreed recently, will open the door for them furthermore.

The number of Japanese investments in Portugal also continues to expand. It has been an honor for me to assist many of the inauguration ceremonies, along with Portuguese leaders, where I witnessed many people, Japanese and Portuguese, with clear commitment to work together in order to contribute the development of their communities. At the same time, I'm also very pleased to see, that some Japanese companies have started cooperating with Portuguese companies in order to explore the CPLP markets.

Finally, I am also very pleased to witness the increased interests in both Japan and Portugal to better understand each other. During the last 4 years, the number of Japanese visitors to Portugal has been doubled, reaching now more than one hundred twenty thousand per year, while the Portuguese visiting Japan annually had increased from 6 thousands to 21 thousands in the same period. At the same time, there are wider opportunities today to appreciate authentic Portuguese and Japanese foods, includinginhos and sakes, in our respective countries. Besides, the events or workshops which promote the Japanese culture in Portugal, including the Japanese food, had improved significantly in number, size and quality, such as

IberoAnime and Festa do Japao, where we now have thousands of participants.

None of these were possible, if I hadn't count on your support. So I thank you once again for your kind friendship, and I'd like to request you to extend the same to my successor.

Now, I will be leaving from Portugal as an Ambassador, but I am not going to say goodbye. I will be taking all these good memories and friendship home with me, and I promise that I'll continue to promote the friendship between Portugal and Japan.

Thank you. Muito Obrigado.

Até Já!