

**Speech by Mr. Nobutaka Shionomiya,
Ambassador of Japan to Portugal
On the occasion of the National Day's Reception
December 7th, 2011**

Boa Tarde!

I am delighted to have you all here for the Japan's National Day reception. His Majesty the Emperor Akihito will be celebrating his 78th anniversary on December 23rd.

Historically, The Emperors have been serving as the symbol of the state, representing the unity of the Japanese people, domestically and internationally. Emperor Akihito is the 125th successor of the oldest continuing royal family in the world.

After the Great Earthquake in March, His Majesty has, despite his age, visited the affected areas and evacuation centers himself, accompanied by Her Majesty the Empress Michiko. Their Majesties the Emperor and the Empress and the Royal family stay very special to and deeply respected by the Japanese people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In March, tsunami caused by the earthquake destroyed many coastal cities, leaving about 20,000 casualties in the north-east region of Japan. Many people are still living in temporary houses away from their homes. The accident of the Fukushima nuclear power plants contaminated the surrounding areas with radiation.

With the support from the international community, the Japanese government is working with the utmost effort to recover and reconstruct the nation from the tragedy.

Among the Japanese people, a general consensus has already been formed to accept a large fiscal burden. We are determined to rebuild a regional society with a strong immunity to natural disasters, and reactivate the local industries.

Also, the halt of the nuclear power plants' activities caused shortage of electricity. To meet these demands, not only companies but individuals have reduced their use of electricity in

the summer, saving much more power than we expected. Japan's 30% of electricity generation depended on nuclear power; thus, energy policies are being re-evaluated.

Nine months have passed since the Great Earthquake, but your generous support has very much encouraged the people of Japan and gave us hope to move forward.

Their Excellencies President Cavaco Silva, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, and many friends in Portugal have expressed us their condolences. The Assembly of the Republic has passed a resolution of solidarity with Japan as well.

Many charity events were organized here, and a moment of condolences was set before many public events for the victims. I was also touched by the act of young students. About 40 children from the elementary school nearby visited my residence and each of them handed me the pictures they drew, and messages with Japanese words written in them to encourage the Japanese people.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my sincere gratitude for your heartfelt sympathies.

Japan will never forget this.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tonight, I would like you to try some Japanese Sake, which is ready for you in another room. These Sake, known for their taste, were imported from the regions affected by the disaster. Among the eight different kinds of prize-winning products, I hope you will find a Sake of your taste.

I also want you to know that there is nothing to worry about the products' safety, as they are strictly checked by multiple authorities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, Japan and Portugal have celebrated 150 years of diplomatic relations last year. Throughout this time, we have been trying to cooperate not only in the areas of politics and economy, but also in the fields of culture and academics, and in the global matters.

Let me give you some updates.

We are about to conclude with Portugal, the “Convention for the avoidance of double taxation” in order to promote mutual investment.

In relation to the financial issue of Portugal, Japan has bought 20% of the bond for the European Financial Stability Facility for Portugal.

I hope it will be of any help to your country.

In addition to last years' events, many cultural exchanges have been made this year. From traditional Noh plays, Japan cinema fest, musical concerts to modern ballet, presentation of Japanese cuisine; and also, popular culture events such as Japan fest held in the Japanese Garden in Belem, exposition of Japan's kingdom of characters, to name a few.

We will be organizing many more in the coming year.

With many events and duties, one splendid year in Portugal has quickly passed since my arrival. And I am looking very forward to next year.

Now, celebrating the 78th anniversary of His Majesty, and wishing the further development of our friendly relationship, let me propose a toast:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Kampai!