

**Speech by Mr. Nobutaka Shionomiya,  
Ambassador of Japan to Portugal  
On the occasion of the “Reopening of the Garden of Japan”  
October 1st 2011, Lisbon**

Mr. Antonio Costa, Mayor of Lisbon,  
Ambassador Antonio Santana Carlos, Diplomatic Advisor to the  
Mayor  
Mrs. Luisa Lino, President of the Portugal-Japan Friendship  
Association,  
Dear colleagues of Diplomatic Corps,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bon Dia!

Welcome to the Garden of Japan!

It is an honor to be here with you at the reopening ceremony of the Garden of Japan, a symbol of friendship between Japan and Portugal.

First of all, on behalf of the Japanese people, I would like to express my deep appreciation to Mayor Costa and the Lisbon City Council; the Japan-Portugal Friendship Association and its President Lino; as well as all those who have contributed in making the Garden of Japan. The passionate and realistic effort of the City and The Association made this a successful project.

About five centuries ago, Portuguese sailors have accidentally reached Tanegashima, an island in the southern part of Japan. They left this very place of Belen to discover the new parts of the World. Our friendly relationship all began from here, where the beautiful Tejo River still streams today. For these reasons it is significant that the Garden of Japan was opened at this place. This garden forever will remind us of our long firm friendship, but also opens the door for the future relations between the two countries.

Let me now talk about “Sakura” or cherry blossoms that are planted in this garden. For many centuries, Japanese have the habit to appreciate the beautiful cherry blossoms with family and

friends in the springtime. Sakura has a special meaning for us, the Japanese, aside from its beauty. Sakura symbolizes the beginning of the new cycle of the four seasons. These beautiful flowers are destined to fall rather quickly - such delicate characteristic of Sakura are thought to represent our culture, and hence, appreciated by the Japanese people.

I hope in the future, this place will be filled with cherry trees in full bloom and become one of the favorite spots for the Lisbon citizens and their families. The Embassy of Japan will spare no efforts to cooperate in achieving this.

Following last year's events to celebrate 150th Anniversary of diplomatic relations, we have "Japan Fest" today. Thanks to the growing popularity on Japanese traditional and popular culture, I am glad that more Portuguese are participating in Japan related events. Today is another opportunity to experience Japanese culture, prepared by JapanNET members and other volunteers. I also wish to express my deep appreciation to all participants and the City Hall for this event.

Finally, I would also like to express my sincere gratitude for your heartfelt sympathy shown after the devastating Great Earthquake on March 11th. Six months have passed since, but your generous support has very much encouraged the people of Japan and gave us hope to move forward. Japan will never forget this.

I hope our amicable relations keep on growing just like these Sakura trees.

Today there is a range of cultural activities, so please enjoy the event!

Muito obrigado!