

**Speech by Mr. Nobutaka Shionomiya,
Ambassador of Japan to Portugal
On the occasion of the National Day's Reception
December 14th, 2010**

Boa Tarde! (Good Evening!)

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome you all tonight, to celebrate Japan's National Day, which is actually designated as December 23rd, for the 77th anniversary of His Majesty the Emperor Akihito.

It is also my privilege to hold this event as my first official duty as Ambassador to Portugal, after arriving here last month. In fact, I have just presented the credentials to His Excellency President Cavaco Silva, last Friday.

Emperor Akihito is the 125th successor of the oldest continuing hereditary royal family in the world. Historically, the Emperors have been serving as the symbol of the state, representing the unity of the Japanese people, domestically and internationally, since long before the current constitution was enacted after the Second World War. Their Majesties the Emperor and the Empress and the Royal family stay very special to and deeply respected by the Japanese people.

Last year, His Majesty Akihito has celebrated the 20th anniversary of his accession to the throne, along with the 50th wedding anniversary with Her Majesty the Empress Michiko.

Their Majesties have visited Portugal in 1985 as Crown Prince and Princess, and later as Emperor and Empress in 1998.

As you may know, the official relationship between Japan and Portugal dates back to 1860, when "the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Commerce" was concluded, making this year our 150th anniversary. However, our amity actually began in the midst of the 16th century.

This is when Portuguese first came to Japan, and brought to us many of their culture, civilization and goods. Facing such a situation, Japanese then, were eager to learn about the foreign

goods and culture, trying to absorb what seemed useful to their traditional society by reforming it. Moreover, the firearms brought by the Portuguese in 1543 were reproduced massively and changed the traditional style of war, contributing to end the era of political disruption in Japan. These facts are taught in social studies classes in Japanese school. This is one reason why many Japanese feel close to Portugal.

As you can see by such a long relationship, this year is more than just a 150th anniversary. This is why throughout the year, with the help of many, various exchange events were successfully organized in the fields of politics, economics, culture, academic and so on, in both countries. In November, "Japan Week" held in OPorto city attracted nearly a thousand of Japanese visitors in just a week, giving a chance to interact with the locals, for example. Also, last week in Lisbon, a public seminar was held by experts on how to create an innovative society for introducing the electric vehicle smoothly. A performance of "NOH", a traditional Japanese play was held as well.

Let me introduce to you now, the official supporters for the anniversary events who are present here tonight.

Ms. Rosa Mota, who is a gold medalist of women's marathon race in the Olympic games in Seoul, 1988 and has a lot of funs in Japan. Ms. Telma Monteiro, who is one of the representing judoka in Portugal. She was awarded silver medal in the world championship tournament in Tokyo, this year.

Mr. Armindo Araujo, who is driving racer belonging to the Mitsubishi Motors and won championship in "the Production Car Rally" in 2009 and 10, with Mitsubishi vehicle machines.

Mr. Rui Zink, who is a eminent novelist awarded "the Pen Club Prize of Portugal" , and invitee of the Japan Foundation for this year.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you, who have organized, supported, contributed and enjoyed these commemorative events.

From next year on, I believe that it will be important that we keep on gathering new ideas and generate new projects to further strengthen our bonds between Japan and Portugal. This should not be reserved only in the areas of cultural exchange, but moreover

in the areas of cutting-edge technology, academic exchange, and international political cooperation, and so on. We should not forget to come up with ideas in the cooperation side of trade and investment and the global partnership for international economy as well.

There are currently more than 50 investments, made by the Japanese companies in Portugal. Tonight, some of them joined us to show you their activities. I wish this to be a business chance for both partners of Japan and Portugal. I would like to express my appreciation for the Japanese companies present here and the Portuguese partners and wish your success.

They are: Daikin Airconditioning Portugal, Honda Portugal, Mitsubishi Motors de Portugal, NEC Portugal - Telecomunicacoes e Sistemas, Nissan Iberia ? Portugal, Takeda Farmaceuticos Portugal, Toyota Caetano Portugal, Yamaha Motor Portugal, and Sanrio.

Despite my recent arrival as ambassador, I have actually been here twice in the past. The first-time was 25 years ago, when I was posted in Spain, and 10 years ago from France. It must be these experiences that make me feel very familiar with this part of Europe. I believe that we Japanese and Portuguese feel comfortable when we are working or living together.

To conclude my remarks, I want to say how delighted I am, to work in such an atmosphere, in order to expand our relationship. I will spare no effort to reinforce this friendship between Japan and Portugal.

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Now, celebrating the birthday of His Majesty and the successful ending of the 150th anniversary activities, and wishing the further development of our relationship, let me propose a toast:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Kampai !