

**Speech by Mr. Nobutaka Shionomiya,
Ambassador of Japan to Portugal
At the opening ceremony of
the photo exhibition: “ European Eyes on Japan ”
held in the European Capital of Culture in City of Guimaraes,
on October 7th, 2012, Guimaraes**

Mr. Mayor of Guimaraes,
President Kawamura of the EU-Japan fest,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bom Dia!

I am very pleased to be here today at the opening ceremony of the photo exhibition: “ European Eyes on Japan ”. This event is held every year at “ the European Capital of Culture ” since 1996, in which various sites of Japan are exhibited.

This year, an eager photographer from Slovenia shares with us the shots from his stay in Toyama Prefecture, located in the North West of Japan. Toyama is famous for its rich natural environment.

This is actually the third time that Portuguese city was chosen as “ the European Capital of Culture ”, following that of Lisbon in 1994, and Oporto in 2001.

For the past 20 years, “ the Japanese committee of EU-Japan fest ” has worked closely with each hosting cities to invite different groups from Japan.

To maintain peace and stability of the international community, mutual understanding among people through culture and art beyond border is crucial. This photo exhibition is an excellent opportunity for you to know the foreign

atmosphere and its environment. I do hope indeed that this exhibition will get you more interested in the Japanese culture and the way of life.

You must be aware that Japan and Europe have a long relationship. Actually, our amity between Japan and Portugal began in the midst of the 16th century when Portuguese came to Japan as the first European.

I would also like to note that next year, we will be celebrating our 470th anniversary since the first visit of Portuguese to Japan.

Please look forward to the events planned for next year. As part of this, "European Eyes on Japan 2013" will be organized - the pictures will be taken by a Portuguese photographer. I hope the events in "the European Capital of Culture" of this year will lead to further cultural exchange programs between Japan and Europe.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of the members who made these events possible. I very much appreciate "the Japanese committee of EU-Japan fest" for inviting participants from Japan, and the Japanese economic organizations for their financial support, and the organizers and people from Portugal and the city of Guimaraes for their strong help.

Despite the era of Internet and easy travel, there are many things that we can learn from each other and various areas that we can cooperate on, just like we did 470 years ago.

Now, please enjoy the exhibition, and thank you for your attention.