

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Nobutaka Shionomiya,
Ambassador of Japan to Portugal
On the occasion of the National Day's Reception
December 14th, 2012**

Welcome to the National Day reception of Japan!

It is my pleasure to have you all here to celebrate His Majesty the Emperor Akihito's anniversary. His Majesty will be 79 years old on the 23rd of this month. The Emperors have been serving as the symbol of the state, representing the unity of the Japanese people, domestically and internationally. After the Great Earthquake that occurred in March 2011, His Majesty has visited the affected areas himself accompanied by Her Majesty the Empress Michiko. He also sent out a heartfelt message through TV. Their Majesties the Emperor and the Empress and the Royal family are very special to the Japanese people. And tonight we are celebrating His Majesty's Birthday.

As you know, last year's devastating natural disaster has affected Japan severely. Although we still have a long way to go, with your support and encouragement, the recovery process has been gradually but advanced.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the history of Japan, Portugal played an important role.

Our relationship dates back to 1543, when the Portuguese "accidentally" reached Tanegashima, a small island in the south-west of Japan. To the Japanese, this was the first encounter with the Europeans. From here on, many western goods came to Japan, and Japanese artifacts travelled to the west. Aside from economic and cultural exchange, Christian missionaries came to Japan. These contacts with Portuguese and other Europeans gave a big impact to the Japanese people of the time, who were just building a new society. This set the base for the coming Edo period, which was a stable and a peaceful era. So, despite the disconnection of our relations occurred in 17th century, the modernization of Japan in 19th century could not have been realized without the impact given by the Portuguese in 16th century.

Now back to the present, Portugal still is a crucial partner of Japan.

However, when I look at our economic relations, I think there are a lot of potentials. Yet we are not getting enough out of it. Ever since Portugal has joined the European Community in 1986, our economic relations deepened. Currently there are about 60 Japanese firms directly investing here. But the reverse is much fewer.

That is why, two secretaries of state from your ministry of economy, along with the business people, who are here tonight with us, visited Japan last week. They met with the Japanese counterparts and talked about joint research and development as well as business cooperation in the fields of renewable energy and smart-community. These are going on under the agreement concluded this year, between the NEDO, Japanese governmental organization and Portuguese Ministry of Economy. We are working to open

new doors for businesses between our two countries.

In addition to the "Convention for Avoidance of Double Taxation" signed last year to promote mutual investment, we got a long awaited news from Brussels recently. The Council of EU has approved the mandate for the Commission to negotiate with Japan for Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). We appreciate the Portuguese government's support for Japan to start the negotiation.

Although Japan is also going through a difficult economic period, the Portuguese and European situation remains our concern. We are willing to support Europe and Portugal for their effort to overcome the actual difficulties. Since last year, Japan had continuously been buying the bonds for the European Financial Stability Facility. Now it adds up to 6.3 billion Euros. Also, we have pledged this year, to make an ad hoc quota increase for IMF by 60 billion US dollars to support the European efforts. We sincerely hope that next year will be a better economic era for both Japan and Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year, we will be celebrating our 470th anniversary, since the Portuguese's first visit to Japan in the 16th century! We can take this opportunity to further deepen our relationship by organizing high-level mutual visits in the fields of politics, economy, business, culture, and so on. To symbolize this, we have created a logo, which I would like to present you here for the first time.

(Logo to be shown)

The logo includes Portuguese guitar that is used in Fado, song of the people, along with "Sakura" the flower of cherry blossom and the rising sun which are symbols of Japan. This logo shows the wish of our further intimate relations. It was designed by Ms. Alice Neto, her voluntary contribution is much appreciated. Thank you.

As part of the celebration, the third "Japan Fest" will be organized with Lisbon city in the garden of Japan in Blem. We would also promote exchanges to be made in the sister cities of Portugal and Japan. Other events will include traditional ones but also modern "Pop culture" as well as presenting Japanese cuisine, for example.

Regarding Japanese culinary culture, Sake tasting will be held tonight, in a separate room, just like last year. Those sakes are brought from various parts of Japan. I hope you'll find your favorite sake.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

His Majesty's birthday is a momentous occasion that takes place as the year reaches the end. Two years have passed since my arrival here. The kindness of the Portuguese people encourages me to work as ambassador and strengthen our relationship every day.

Now, celebrating the 79th anniversary of His Majesty, and wishing to hear a beautiful fado as we enjoy the “sakura” bloom next year, let me propose a toast:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Kampai!