

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Nobutaka Shinomiya,
Ambassador of Japan to Portugal
On the occasion of the Farewell Reception
of Ambassador Shinomiya
September 26th, 2013**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

Welcome!

And thank you for joining me and my family for our farewell reception.

I have mixed feelings today.

I will be returning to Japan with a satisfaction of my mission fully accomplished as ambassador. Yet the hardest part of being a diplomat is always the departure. This I will never get used to: leaving the country that has become more than just a posting, and people whom I had a chance to work with became intimate friends. Therefore, I really appreciate your presence tonight.

The three years flew by really quickly. But it was a rich three years.

When I have first assumed ambassadorship here in autumn of 2010, Japan and Portugal were celebrating the 150th anniversary since the treaty of commerce was concluded. But our amity actually began many years before that time, when the Portuguese navigators accidentally reached Japan in 1543. They were the first Europeans to ever come to Japan! So this year, Japan and Portugal are celebrating the 470th anniversary since our first encounter.

Many events were hosted throughout the three years, together with the support of people and organizations of both countries. For example, in order to share the beauty of Sakura, or the cherry blossoms, Garden of Japan in Belem was re-opened in 2011. There, with the help of Lisbon city and the “Portugal-Japan Friendship Association”, Japanese summer festival, “Festa do Japao” was organized every year for three times. And each time, more people joined and the scale got bigger. I was especially happy to see the young generations participating. The interest of the young Portuguese towards Japan, and vice versa, will without doubt greatly contribute to the enforcement of our future relations.

However, despite our long historical relations, our potential capabilities were not yet fully fulfilled, especially in the field of economic exchange. Therefore, further promoting this was one of my high priority tasks.

To encourage mutual investment, we concluded with the Portuguese government, the “Convention for the avoidance of double taxation” in 2011.

Early this year, then foreign minister Paulo Portas visited Japan, accompanied by Portuguese business delegate. Important Japanese economic mission also visited Portugal this summer. The missions were able to meet with key persons in each field of both countries and expand their network, which will be crucial in future mutual cooperation. These are only the beginning of more mutual visits to follow.

Portugal is familiar to many of us, as we learn about our historical relations from an early stage in social studies classes.

However, I want more Japanese people to know about “modern day Portugal”. Many of the Japanese tourists who actually visit here are fascinated by the beautiful city, the landscape, and its

culture. But as they spend time here and travel, they are amazed by the charm of people. Many of Japanese tourists tell me that they wish to return here once more. We, the Japanese and the Portuguese feel comfortable working or living together. This is exactly how I have been feeling for last three years.

Another effort we made was to promote sister city exchanges. There are many existing and candidate sister cities between our countries. Aside from official exchanges in municipality levels, many home stay programs for the young or exchanges among cultural groups are organized. In addition to this, the embassy is cooperating with the sister city municipalities to promote trade through the exchange of local business people. We also supported exchange of Rotarians in sister cities.

The Japanese and Portuguese government, with Lisbon city and some private companies of both countries are working on a project to make “Smart city in Lisbon”. The objective of this collaboration is to use cutting-edge technology in order to create an environment friendly and energy efficient society in the Portugal’ s capital. And I am proud to say that such a kind of project is led by Japan and Portugal together.

One of my unforgettable memories in Portugal is the people's very kind reaction to us in March 2011. When Japan seriously suffered from the great earthquake, tsunami and the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plants, the Portuguese people were there to encourage us. We are still grateful for your heartfelt sympathies which we will always remember.

With many events, duties and encounters with new people, three splendid years in Portugal have quickly passed. The kindness of the Portuguese people has also encouraged me to serve as ambassador to further strengthen our relationship every day.

Now, I will be leaving Portugal in 12 days. It was indeed an honor and pleasure to work in Portugal, and I hope you will be as kind to my successor as you were to me.

Please enjoy the party tonight.

And I wish to see you again in the future.

Thank you very much,

MUITO OBRIGADO!