

Opening Address by His Excellency Mr. Hiroshi Azuma,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Portuguese Republic,
at the “Colloquium: Japan, Portugal and EU Cooperation
--- Strengthening foundations for tomorrow’s challenges ---“
Palácio das Necessidades / Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal,
Lisbon, 28th October, 2014

Your Excellency Mr. Rui Machete, Minister of State and Foreign Affairs
Your Excellency Mr. Bruno Maçães, Secretary of State for European Affairs
Distinguished Chairs and Panelists
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

It is a matter for mutual congratulation that we hold the “Colloquium: Japan, Portugal and EU Cooperation” under the joint auspices of the Embassy of Japan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal today here in Lisbon. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Minister Rui Machete, Secretary of State Bruno Maçães and all the other Portuguese organizers for their precious efforts to implement the project. Also I would like to extend my cordial welcome to Distinguished Chairs and Panelists who have come all the way to this place to attend the sessions.

At the opening of the Colloquium, Mr. Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, has sent me his personal message from Tokyo. Let me read it out:

“It is a great pleasure to extend my heartiest congratulation on the “Colloquium: Japan, Portugal and EU Cooperation.”

There is a long and historical bond between Japan and Portugal, which celebrated the 470th anniversary of bilateral exchanges last year. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe paid an official visit to Portugal last May as a first prime minister of Japan to visit this country. It is symbolic of how much Japan-Portugal relations are making further progress in a variety of fields.

Japan and European countries share the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and principles such as open markets and a rule-based international system. Building upon these, Japan and the European

Union have been holding negotiations on an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with a view to expanding and strengthening cooperation in a broad range of areas and to enhancing trade and investment.

Therefore, I expect that eminent panelists of great insight and with rich experience in political, economic and cultural fields who are gathering together from Japan, Portugal and the EU will have candid discussions on the present and future relations between Japan and Portugal as well as between Japan and the EU. I consider it very timely.

I wish that a diversity of fresh ideas will be presented at today's Colloquium in order to raise our exchanges to an even higher dimension by making the most of the momentum of strengthening our cooperative relations, which has been enhanced by the visit of Prime Minister Abe to Portugal.

28th October, 2014

Fumio Kishida

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan"

Ladies and gentlemen

As Foreign Minister Kishida mentioned in his message, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Portugal last May. It was the first visit by an incumbent Japanese Prime Minister to this country, which turned out historical and epoch-making. I consider that today's Colloquium is of great importance as a follow-up of Prime Minister's visit in further promoting the relationship between Japan and Portugal as well as between Japan and Europe toward a future.

Let me elaborate on the subjects.

Here in Lisbon, Prime Minister Abe held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Passos Coelho to discuss a wide variety of issues in depth. I myself was present at the meeting and felt deeply impressed by an intensive exchange of views between them.

In the political and security aspect, the two Prime Ministers confirmed as foundations

for future development of the bilateral relationship that both Japan and Portugal are globally open “Ocean states” and share fundamental values and principles such as democracy. As far as the economic field is concerned, the two leaders agreed to various measures for enhancing exchanges based on the common understanding that things are ready for Japan and Portugal, just at a “clean exit” from the Adjustment Program, to fully address the challenge of trade and investment promotion. They highlighted the importance of increasing cultural and academic cooperation and people-to-people-exchange even more with a view to improving mutual understanding between the two countries.

Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Passos Coelho stressed their commitment to build up cooperation not only in the bilateral context but also in broader frameworks. The first is the relationship between Japan and Europe as a whole. The second is the contacts between Japan and the Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP) member countries.

Since the summit meeting in Lisbon, we have been working together with the Government and the people of Portugal to follow up its important outcomes.

As to the bilateral relations between Japan and Portugal, high-level exchanges have been taking place in the political area. For instance, Ms. Tomomi Inada, Minister of State of the Cabinet Office, and two parliamentary groups came from Japan to Portugal during the last summer time. From Portugal, the President of the Champalimaud Foundation was invited to Japan to attend the “World Assembly for Women in Tokyo; WAW! Tokyo 2014” last September: there she made a great contribution to the discussions and this event’s handouts are available for you today. In addition to these mutual visits, I feel very encouraged that Mr. Paulo Portas, Vice-Prime-Minister of Portugal, is scheduled to visit Japan again soon.

In terms of economic-relation, Ms. Assunção Cristas, Minister for Agriculture and Sea, traveled to Japan in June and spent busy days with a number of meetings and site visits. The Business Delegation arranged by JETRO Paris will arrive in Portugal today and around 20 Japanese businesspersons will take part in this Colloquium.

With regard to cultural exchanges, the “Festa do Japão” of last June in Belem was a great success this year as well. At the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Minister

Inada gave a speech on “Cool Japan” and earned a very good reputation in July. And now the “Exhibition of Japanese Calligraphy” is being held there with 91 works by the most prominent Japanese Calligraphers.

Beyond the Japan-Portugal bilateral relations, as Foreign Minister Kishida underscored in his message, Japan and Europe are having negotiations on the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between Japan and the EU. I would like to emphasize that a comprehensive and high-level EPA will be mutually beneficial for both Japan and Europe and that Japan wishes the early conclusion of the agreement.

As to the contacts between Japan and the CPLP, the summit meeting of this organization held in East Timor last July decided to grant the Category of Associate Observer to Japan. In line with this, early this month, the Embassy of Japan in Portugal dispatched its political officer to Sao Tome and Principe as an observer to the National Elections. I believe in special importance this monitoring mission has taken on at an early phase of Japan’s liaison with the CPLP. And Japanese businesspersons and the member companies of the “CPLP Business Confederation” are scheduled to have their first contacts here in Lisbon on the occasion of the JETRO delegation’s visit to Portugal.

It is my firm conviction that, by way of implementing these cooperation initiatives, the relations between Japan and Portugal have been entering a “new stage” and that our two countries will strive for stronger bilateral ties in the political, economic, cultural and all the other fields from now onward. I am sure that the Colloquium, included in the two Prime Ministers’ Joint Communiqué, will provide us concrete approaches to these goals. This is also an important step toward an official visit of Prime Minister Passos Coelho to Japan in a near future.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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