

Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Kodama, Ambassador of Japan to  
the EU  
at the Garden Party at the Residence  
on 15 June, 2017

Honorable Members of the European Parliament,  
Fellow Ambassadors,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

**(Introduction)**

Good evening.

Thank you very much for attending our annual Garden Party at my Residence here in Boitsfort.

I must confess that I was apprehensively checking the weather forecast of June the 16<sup>th</sup> over the last 2 weeks, which alternated between sunshine and thunderstorms! For our part, we made a traditional Japanese paper doll, “teruteru bozu”, a sunny boy, to ensure good weather for tonight.

Fortunately the sky is bright and clear on this beautiful mid-summer night and I am pleased that so many of you have joined us this evening.

**(On His Majesty the Emperor)**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to say a few words about His Majesty the Emperor, who

in a rare televised video message to the Japanese people last summer, indicated his desire to abdicate, citing concerns that his advanced age and declining health might prevent him from performing his official duties.

In response, the Japanese nation, including the Government and the Parliament, began the process of realizing the wishes of His Majesty.

This month, the Japanese Diet (Parliament) passed and enacted a Bill Stipulating Special Provisions under the Imperial House Law for Issues Related to the Emperor's Abdication.

Article 1 of the special law states that the Emperor is deeply concerned about his long-term ability to continue his activities as head of state due to his advanced age, and that the people understand and sympathize with these concerns.

On the date that this law comes into force, His Majesty will abdicate, and His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince will immediately ascend to the throne. This date will be set by a government ordinance within 3 years of the legislation's promulgation.

In light of these developments, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to their Majesties, the Emperor and the Empress, whose selfless and tireless efforts to comfort the sick, the elderly and the victims of natural disasters give hope and courage to so many.

I humbly wish their Majesties continued good health and happiness.

### **(On food safety in Japan)**

Now, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly touch upon

the issue of food safety in Japan. Since the establishment of a very stringent surveillance system after the accident at the nuclear power station in Fukushima in March 2011, only safe food is marketed in Japan. The appropriateness of the measures taken in Japan has been well recognized by relevant international organizations. Most recently, the Director-General of FAO, Mr. Graziano da Silva, clearly stated in his speech last month, “We don’t see any reason to raise concern about the safety of food (in Japan).” I sincerely hope that all countries and regions will listen to scientific evidence and lift any outstanding import restrictions so that more people around the world can enjoy high-quality Japanese food.

**(On Japan-EU EPA and SPA)**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Prime Minister Abe, Mr. Tusk and Mr. Junker firmly believe that Japan and the EU must further deepen their partnership and continue to hoist the flag of free trade together against protectionist movements across the world.

From this perspective, our leaders reaffirmed the utmost importance of reaching an agreement in principle on the Japan-EU EPA and SPA. They also agreed to instruct their negotiators to accelerate the negotiations as the agreement is within reach, and shared the view that they have reached the stage of exercising political leadership.

We have been continuously negotiating with the aim of reaching an agreement in principle, taking into account the Japan-EU summit which will be held on the occasion of the G20 summit in July. Indeed the chief negotiators, led by Mr. Petriccione, are now in Tokyo, and negotiations will start at the chief negotiator’s level next week on 19 June.

It is my sincere hope we will reach an agreement in principle on both the EPA and SPA as soon as possible.

**(On displays at this garden party)**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding my remarks, please allow me to briefly present the exhibits we have on display:

You may have noticed the exhibits from JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency) in the salon. JAXA's contributions to aerospace technology include;

- Monitoring climate change and natural disasters by earth observation,
- Developing next generation launch vehicles,
- Human spaceflight activities on the International Space Station,
- Space science missions and space exploration. You can find out more about JAXA's activities inside the Residence.

In the garden, we have two of Toyota's most symbolic vehicles on display;

The first is the Toyota Mirai (meaning "future"), the first mass-produced Fuel Cell Electric car available in Europe. Mirai is powered by hydrogen and can run for 500kms without refueling. Furthermore, Mirai can be refilled in less than 3 minutes and its only tailpipe emission is pure water (H<sub>2</sub>O)!

The second car is the latest generation Lexus flagship, the new LS. It showcases both, the latest innovative technologies such as the world's first intuitive pedestrian detection function with active steering; and the most tangible expression of the unique philosophy of Omotenashi, or exceptional hospitality with the rear massage seats inspired by ancient Japanese Shiatsu

principles .

**(Concluding remarks)**

Finally, I invite you to enjoy the refreshments, including Japanese sake, sushi and yakitori, as well as some Belgian beer called “Uijin” created by the Japanese . Lastly, you are most welcome to try some Japanese chocolates made by Roys, who has opened a shop in Antwerp recently.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you once again for being here tonight. I wish you all a lovely evening.

(End)