

**Speech at Japan-EU Labour Symposium by H.E Ambassador
Kodama on 4 July 2018**

Mr. KORTE, Director-General, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is a privilege and honor for me to be here at the 17th EU-Japan
Labour Symposium on 'future of work.'

I would like to extend my appreciation to Mr. KORTE, and the social
partners and experts who prepared this symposium.

To begin with, I would like to touch upon Japan-EU relations. Last
year, the agreement in principle of the Japan-EU EPA was confirmed by
our leaders at the Japan-EU Summit held in Brussels in July, and Japan
and the EU concluded the negotiations in December.

The finalization of the Japan-EU EPA demonstrates to the world the firm political will of both Japan and the EU to hold the flag of free trade high during these times of rising protectionism. We believe the Japan- EU EPA will be the benchmark for high quality, free, open and fair trade and investment rules in the 21st century.

This EPA will create a huge free trade area of 600 million people, which produces approximately 30 percent of the world's GDP. It will bring our two economies closer by addressing issues related to the abolition of tariff and non-tariff measures, while protecting geographical and intellectual properties rights. In addition, it includes a comprehensive trade and sustainable development chapter. I hope that through the implementation of this chapter, the working environment will be improved in both Japan and the EU.

In order to conclude the agreements, we have to first sign the agreements. Then both Japanese and European Parliaments will be asked to approve the agreements. It is my sincere hope that these agreements

will enter into force as early as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The theme of this Symposium is the “future of work”. Japan published an “Action Plan for Work Style Reform” in May 2017. In this Action plan, the promotion of a flexible work style is mentioned. In this regard, the work style of self-employed workers is one of the challenges faced in Japan at this time.

Currently, the labour force in Japan is approximately 66 million workers. Of them, about 5.5 million workers are self-employed. The percentage of self-employed workers in the labour force is 8%. Compared to other countries, this number is not particularly high.

However, it is predicted that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is on its way, and with the further development of digitalization and AI, the number of self-employed workers will increase.

It is thought that in the future, AI will perform the routine work that

human beings have been doing so far, while human beings will be required to perform the creative jobs. In this situation, technological advancements are so fast that it will be difficult for companies to predict what will happen and maintain their labour force internally. Companies will instead outsource the jobs for innovative human resources to self-employed workers.

In this symposium, we will analyze the status of this changing world of work, and I understand that we will discuss possible solutions. It is said that self-employed workers have some advantages, such as a highly flexible working style and good work-life balance. On the other hand, the employment situation for these workers can be precarious. How do we protect working conditions related to self-employed workers while also maintaining the advantages? Our discussion today might cover Labour legislation which could deal with this issue.

Ladies and gentlemen,

No matter what, Japan must consider possible solutions, including

labour legislation, in response to the increasing new forms of employment. This is also true for the EU, and Japan and the EU have these challenges in common. In addition, these challenges are being discussed in the OECD and ILO, so the future of work is really a global theme.

The world of employment consists of workers, employers and the government. This symposium is a valuable opportunity in which social partners and experts participate in addition to government officials. I hope that the Japan-EU labour representatives will share their knowledge and experience related to the worldwide theme of “the future of work” and conduct active discussion that leads to the further development of the Japan-EU relationship and makes productive use of this Symposium.

Lastly, I hope that this Symposium will continue to develop in the future, and we will have many more interesting discussions on Japan-EU Labour issues.

Thank you.