

Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Kodama, Ambassador of Japan to the EU  
At the Garden Party at the Residence  
On 13 June, 2019

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

Good evening,

Thank you very much for attending our annual garden party.

It is now the third year that I have had the pleasure to host this Garden Party, and I believe this year is very special for two reasons.

**Firstly, a new era called “Reiwa” has started, with His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito now on the throne.**

On 30th April, His Majesty the Emperor Akihito abdicated, therefore drawing the Heisei era, which had lasted for 30 years (since 1989), to a close. During these three decades, Japan, while enjoying peace and prosperity, also faced a number of hardships, including a series of major natural disasters. At such times, His Majesty the Emperor, together with Her Majesty the Empress, walked alongside the people of Japan, encouraging disaster victims in a close and friendly manner and giving the Japanese people courage and hope for tomorrow.

**I wish in the strongest terms for Their Majesties the Emperor Emeritus and Empress Emerita to remain in good health for many years to come.**

**On the following day, May 1<sup>st</sup>, His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Naruhito ascended the throne, becoming the new Emperor and starting the “Reiwa” era, which translates as “beautiful harmony”.**

On the occasion of the first audience after the accession to the throne, Prime Minister Abe stated that “we are determined to create, in the midst of a rapidly changing international situation, a bright future for a Japan in which we take pride, a Japan that is peaceful and brimming with hope, and to create an era of culture coming into

being and flourishing when people bring their hearts and minds together in a beautiful manner”.

**Today I would also like to express my heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty the Emperor and Her Majesty the Empress, to pray for peace in the era of Reiwa and to extend my best wishes for the Imperial Household to flourish further.**

The second point which I would like to emphasise this evening is that **a new era between Japan and the EU has started ushering in the beginning of our truly new and much more robust Japan-EU relationship.**

I will illustrate this with **three major reasons.**

**The first is the Japan – EU Economic Partnership Agreement which entered into force on February 1<sup>st</sup> of this year.** The EPA has created the world’s biggest free, open and fair economic zone to date, comprising almost 640 million people, as well as covering about 30% of the world’s GDP and nearly 40% of global trade.

During the three month period from February to April, this year, the EU’s exports of cheese, wine and pork meat to Japan significantly increased by 21%, 19 % and 24 % respectively, in comparison with the same period last year. Similarly, Japan’s car exports to the EU increased by 13%.

With the entry into force of the EPA, Japan and the EU are sending a powerful message to promote free, fair and rules-based trade. Together, we have demonstrated our unflinching political will to the rest of the world to keep the flag of free trade waving high and to powerfully advance free trade.

**The second epoch-making achievement was the start of the provisional application of the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) as of February 1<sup>st</sup>.**

The first Joint Committee of the SPA was held in Tokyo in March and identified priority areas such as; sustainable connectivity and quality infrastructure, climate change, and data security and security cooperation under the SPA. The SPA is testament to the firm political will shared by Japan and the EU to strengthen our overall partnership and advance peace, stability and prosperity globally.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me turn the clock back to 12th December 2018 in Strasbourg when the European Parliament voted to give its consent to both the EPA & SPA between Japan and the EU.

The outcomes of the votes were as follows: 71% (474 out of 661) of MEPs voted in favor of the EPA and 81% (547 out of 673) of MEPs voted in favor of the SPA.

These historic and indeed record-breaking votes for the EPA and SPA represent the strongest endorsement which the European Parliament has given to an agreement which the EU has concluded with a third country. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation to all the MEPs for their rousing support for our EPA and SPA.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**The third epoch-making achievement was the adoption on 23rd January 2019, by the European Commission and Japan's Personal Information Protection Commission (PPC), of the decisions recognising each other's personal data protection system as equivalent.**

The Japan – EU mutual data adequacy decisions have created the world's largest area of safe data transfers, based on a high level of protection of personal data and privacy, a core set of individual rights and enforcement by an independent data protection authority.

Japan and the EU will continue to work together with international partners to shape global standards for the protection of personal data.

**Commissioner Jourova, thank you very much for your strong leadership and unflinching commitment to make this mutual adequacy arrangement a reality.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope you will now agree with me as I pronounce that we have never had it so good between Japan and the EU.

Of course there is no room for complacency. As close and like-minded partners, Japan and the EU share joint ambitions to ensure the success of the June G20 Summit in Osaka, by upholding shared values, delivering on past commitments and addressing emerging challenges.

(Company displays)

Ladies and gentlemen,

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

The display which you saw as you came into the building is that of the Japanese National Tourist Organization (**JNTO**) promoting tourism to Japan. We also have **JR East's** promotional materials for trips within Japan and a banner from **Mitsubishi Electric Europe** on climate technology.

In the salon, we have **KANEKA's** BIODEGRADABLE POLYMER PHBH, which is a great substitute for conventional plastic products.

We then have examples of three innovative products from **Nitto**. Their polarizing film used for our smartphones, a breathable membrane and a medical tape so thin that it feels like a second skin.

In the garden, we have **Toyota's** Supra. It is back after a 17 year hiatus, and despite benefitting from the latest technology, its spirit has never changed.

(Concluding remarks)

In the garden, I invite you to enjoy the refreshments including sushi, yakitori, and a Belgian beer called "**Uijin**" created by a Japanese brewing company. Finally, this year, we have teamed up with **Fukushima prefecture**, and are proud to offer award-winning Japanese sake from the region in order to recognise the people of Fukushima's continuously indomitable efforts for a sustainable recovery and renewal from the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your attention.

Please enjoy the evening.

(END)