

Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Kodama, Ambassador of Japan to the EU
At the Opening Ceremony of a New Manufacturing Line at Nitto Belgium

21 January, 2020

Mr. Hideo Takasaki, President of Nitto Denko Corporation,
Mr. Sam Strijckmans, Nitto EMEA NV
Ms. Zuhal Demir, Flemish Minister of Justice, Environment, Energy and Tourism,
Mr. Wouter Beke, Flemish Minister of Welfare, Health, Families and Poverty
Reduction,
Ms. Lydia Peeters, Flemish Minister of Mobility and Public Works,
Mr. Herman Reynders, Governor of Limburg Province,
Mr. Wim Dries, Mayor of Genk
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,

It gives me great pleasure to attend the official opening ceremony of a New Manufacturing Line at Nitto Belgium in Genk.

Let me congratulate Nitto Belgium upon today's inauguration of this new and unique 3.3 meter wide coating line for surface protection tapes which help Nitto's business partners to produce wide solar control glass panels.

Here I would like to take note of Nitto's strength "to stay on top of industry disruption", if I may borrow the words of President Takasaki. This investment does indeed exemplify Nitto's strategy of becoming a leading supplier of surface protection tapes to industry-leading customers.

According to a horizon scanning exercise looking toward the year 2030 conducted by the OECD, the next production revolution is expected to take place through the confluence of disruptive technologies. They range from a variety of digital technologies (e.g. 3D printing, the Internet of Things, advanced robotics) and new materials (e.g. bio-or nano-based) to new processes (e.g. data-driven production, artificial intelligence, synthetic biology).

What is remarkable about Nitto? Nitto, a century old Japanese diversified material manufacturer, has dynamically sustained growth with a bird's eye view of the market

to identify where a new production revolution involving digital technologies, new materials and processes is taking place.

The European Commission started their mandate from December the first, last year. We now know that the EU's top priority for next five years is to adopt and implement the Green New Deal, thereby the EU will be the first continent in the world to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Nitto's investment in Genk should be commended as a green investment in its own right, and as a tangible contribution to the EU's transition to a low carbon society.

The second perspective which I would like to emphasize is that a new era has started to usher in a truly renewed and much more robust Japan-EU relationship, including Belgium.

Let me explain this with three major reasons.

The first is the Japan – EU Economic Partnership Agreement which entered into force on February 1st last 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 eight month period from February to September last year, the EU's exports of cheese, wine, and pork meat to Japan significantly increased by 14%, 32 % and 10 % respectively, in comparison with the same period of the previous year. Similarly, Japan's exports of cars, wine and wagyu beef to the EU increased by between 20 to 30%, respectively.

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 1st, last year. Japan and the EU have 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.

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 recognizing each other's personal data protection systems as equivalent. These mutual data adequacy decisions have created the world's largest area of safe data transfers covering the free trade zone of 640 million people, based on a high level of protection of personal data and privacy.

So my message to both Japanese and European firms including Nitto is this; we have never had it so good between Japan and the EU and therefore, please set sail for greater opportunities to further enhance trade, investment and all dimensions of connectivity between Japan and the EU including digital, transport, energy and people-to-people exchanges.

(Conclusion)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last June, at the annual garden party which I hosted at my residence in Brussels, Nitto provided a booth to display three innovative products. Their polarizing film used for our smartphones, a breathable membrane and a medical tape so thin that it feels like a second skin. To tell you the truth, I had no idea back then what exactly Nitto was producing. I only knew Nitto as a great sponsor of the ATP finals. But today I know the company better and I am proud of Nitto, for what it's worth.

Thank you for inviting me to this opening ceremony. I wish Nitto continued success in its future endeavors to stay on top of industry disruption for the sustainable future of humanity and this beautiful planet earth.

I thank you for your attention.

(END)