

Welcome Remarks by Ambassador Kazuo Kodama

**At a Reception to celebrate the New Year and the first anniversary of
the entry into force of the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement**

On January 23, 2020

At the Mission of Japan to the European Union, Brussels

Commissioner Breton,

European Parliament Vice-President Silva Pereira,

Honorable Members of the European Parliament,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening. A very happy New Year to you all.

(Strategic Significance of the Japan-EU EPA)

Back on February 1st, last year, the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement entered into force creating the world's biggest free, open and fair economic space. Together, we have demonstrated to the world our firm political will and commitment to advance free, fair and open trade.

(Tangible impact of the Japan-EU EPA)

Leading up to the EPA's first anniversary, I am very pleased to tell you that our EPA has already delivered a tangible impact. For example, EU exports of wine to Japan between February and November of last year increased by 12% in comparison with the same period a year previously, resulting in total wine exports of 132.8 billion yen during this period. At the same time, Japanese exports of Wagyu beef to the EU increased by 28%, with total Wagyu beef exports amounting to 1.74 billion yen.

The success of our EPA largely depends on the extent to which firms from Japan and the EU utilize it. According to a JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization) survey, our EPA boasts the highest utilization rate for Japanese importers among all EPAs concluded by Japan.

(World's most advanced FTA)

Ladies and gentlemen,

We believe our EPA can be a model EPA for the 21st century because it goes well beyond a simple free trade agreement.

Let me explain why.

First, in addition to tariff elimination, our EPA equally addresses non-tariff measures (NTMs) including regulatory cooperation in order to expand market access to the automotive sector, medical devices, food additives, as well as the food safety and chemical sectors.

Second, our EPA aims to be business friendly. In order to maximize the benefits for SMEs, authorities on both sides have nominated responsible offices which will liaise with SMEs and provide useful online information.

Third, the Japan-EU EPA also commits to paving the way for further two-way investment.

Fourth, our safe, high-quality agrifood products will be protected by the introduction of Geographical Indications (GIs).

More than 50 Japanese GIs are protected in the European market, while over 200 EU GIs are protected in Japan.

(Trade and Sustainable Development)

Last but not least, our EPA contains a highly advanced Trade and Sustainable Development Chapter. In particular, Japan and the EU reaffirm our commitment to effectively implement the Paris Agreement. Our EPA is the very first EPA which incorporates the Paris Agreement.

(Conclusion)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In today's difficult world, our liberal democracies are challenged by

illiberal authoritarianism fueled by populism or nationalism all over the world. Japan stands ready to work together with the EU to protect and promote liberal democratic values. Cooperation between like-minded partners such as Japan and the EU has never been more vital.

On this special occasion to celebrate the first anniversary of the entry into force of our EPA, we have teamed up with a group of Japanese sake experts who play an active role in promoting top quality Japanese sake in Europe.

We are delighted to offer you pairings of 11 Japanese sakes and 5 European cheeses.

It is our hope that you will literally feel an even closer partnership between Japan and the EU through the taste of these sake and cheese pairings, or even marriages.

We have prepared plenty of food for you, including sushi and some traditional festive food for the New Year. Please enjoy yourself.

Thank you very much for your attention.

(END)