

Remarks by Ambassador KODAMA Kazuo at the Ceremony for  
the Conferral of the “Order of the Rising Sun on Mr. Pedro  
Silva Pereira MEP, Vice-President of the European Parliament

(Residence of the Ambassador,  
Watermael-Boitsfort, February 5, 2020)

Vice-President of the European Parliament, the Honourable  
Pedro Silva Pereira,

Commissioner Ferreira,

Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good Evening.

I am delighted to be united with you on this very special  
occasion to confer upon the Honourable Pedro Silva Pereira,  
Vice-President of the European Parliament, the Japanese  
“Order of the Rising Sun”.

The decoration is in recognition of Vice-President Silva  
Pereira’s outstanding contribution to the enhancement of the  
partnership and friendship between Japan and the European  
Union during his career as a distinguished member of the  
European Parliament.

Here I would like to be more specific in highlighting his great contribution as the rapporteur for our EPA in the European Parliament to ensure that the European Parliament gave its consent to the Japan–EU Economic Partnership Agreement through deliberations in INTA(the Committee on International Trade) and finally at the Plenary.

Let me turn the clock back to 12 December 2018 in Strasbourg when the European Parliament voted to give its consent to the EPA between Japan and the EU. Out of 661 MEPs, 474 MEPs(71%) voted in favor of the EPA.

There was one more historic vote cast at the plenary right after the consent–giving vote. It was the vote on a motion introduced by the rapporteur, the Honourable Pedro Silva Pereira, to adopt the resolution recommending that all MEPs welcome and support the Japan–EU EPA. Throughout the drafting process, he worked tirelessly, consulting numerous MEPs from all of the political groups as well as experts during the many organized hearings. In the end, 474 MEPs voted in favor of the resolution welcoming and supporting the EPA.

These historic and indeed record–breaking votes for the EPA represent the strongest endorsement given to an agreement that the EU has concluded with a third country. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation to the Honorable Pedro Silva Pereira for everything that you have done for the EPA.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On February 1st, this year, we celebrated the first anniversary of the entry into force of the Japan–EU EPA which has created the world’s biggest free, open and fair economic space. Together, Japan and the EU have demonstrated to the world our firm political will and commitment to a rules–based international trade and investment order.

I am very pleased to inform you that our EPA has already delivered a positive result. In the first ten months following the implementation of the agreement, EU exports to Japan increased by 6.6% compared to the same period the year before. Japan’s exports to the EU went up by 6.3% in the same period.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Everyone here knows Vice–President Silva Pereira very well, but on this special occasion, let me speak briefly about his distinguished career in public life.

With a professional background in law, he held political office in his native Portugal for years, including as a Member of Parliament, State Secretary for Spatial Planning and Nature Conservation, and Minister of the Presidency. As soon as he was elected to the European Parliament in 2014, he distinguished himself as Vice–Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and as a Member or Substitute Member of other prominent committees such as the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee on International Trade. It was in this Committee on International Trade that he assumed the role

of standing rapporteur for the Japan–EU EPA. After being re-elected as an MEP in May 2019, he was elected as Vice-President of the European Parliament.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Vice-President Silva Pereira's engagement with Japan is not limited to his role as standing rapporteur. He joined the Delegation for relations with Japan as soon as he was elected to the European Parliament. Through his numerous visits to Japan, he made many friends and allies for the EU in Japan. The reason is this; whenever I met and discussed with him, I was always impressed by his fairness, his empathy with others, his capacity to put himself into the position of others. In today's difficult world, such a virtue is sorely needed. Our liberal democracies are challenged on many fronts by populism, nationalism and authoritarianism. Japan stands ready to work together with the EU to protect and promote liberal democratic values. For this joint endeavour, I find Vice President Silva Pereira to be a most fitting, reliable and trusted partner in the European Parliament.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Now, on behalf of the Government of Japan and in the name of His Majesty the Emperor, it is my honour to confer upon the Honourable Mr. Pedro Silva Pereira the Patent of Decoration of the "Order of the Rising Sun". Pedro, I would like to express my most sincere congratulations to you.

(End)