

# ***The Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement***

[Check Against Delivery]

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Good morning.

First of all, I would like to express my deep appreciation to Mr Alojz Peterle MEP, for bringing together this event.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak my perspective on the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement, or SPA.

We have already had 4 rounds of negotiations, and in these negotiation rounds, we have made good progress.

This agreement is going to provide a solid, legal foundation for our relationship in a most comprehensive manner. In a sense, it could be seen as a fundamental treaty between the two.

Our long running relationship is already broad and deep across government, private, educational and other spheres.

However, we never had a fundamental, legal document to support these broad engagements and this is what the SPA will achieve.

The SPA will be an agreement of substance.

It is a strategic agreement that encompasses the entire relationship and promotes substantial cooperation on a wide variety of areas.

This will be a beacon that sheds light on the path of our partnership for years to come.

This is different from other agreements in terms of coverage, depth and the level of commitment to the responsibilities that global players should carry.

We see the SPA and Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) as two wheels on a vehicle. Two independent agreements that move forward together.

This morning, I would like to outline what exactly we want to achieve through this agreement and why.

## **1. Japan: Setting a new paradigm**

First, turning to Japanese society.

- ***New paradigm for society***

Japan is currently setting a new paradigm, to overcome the various challenges it faces.

From an aging society, low growth, and climate change to natural disasters. These challenges have had, and will have, a deep impact on our society.

This new paradigm aims to create a new society; which is vibrant, responsible and engaged.

In setting out such an ambition for our society, we must first ensure that we build it upon the strongest foundations, which is the peace and security of the world, underpinned by fundamental values.

- ***Policies of PM Abe: “Abenomics” and “Proactive Contributor to Peace”***

Within such a context, the Abe administration has been powerfully implementing economic and political strategies which will revive our society.

On the economic front, Prime Minister Abe has pushed forward the so-called “Abenomics”. This is characterised by “the three arrows”; aggressive monetary policy, flexible fiscal policy combined with austerity measures such as raising consumption tax and a growth policy, which includes structural and regulatory reform to boost Japan's innovativeness.

On peace and security, under the Abe administration, Japan is playing the role of the “Proactive Contributor to Peace”. Japan will contribute even more proactively in securing, peace, stability, and prosperity of the international community, building upon our credential as a peace-loving nation.

## **2. Japan and the EU: Indispensable partners**

Let us now turn to Japan and the EU.

The world is seeing new dynamics resulting in divergent views on what would be guiding principles in the international arena.

The nature of the threat is gradually evolving with cybercrime, piracy and terrorism becoming ever-more threatening.

In face of such dynamism, Japan should closely cooperate with the partners that face the same challenges and share the same aspirations and responsibilities.

In this context I state with strong conviction that Japan and the EU are best-suited and indispensable partners.

As two of the global powers with mature democracy and sophisticated economies, with unique strength in our “soft power”, we are bound by responsibility to lead others by example.

That is why we are negotiating the SPA.

### **3. The SPA: Pillars for cooperation**

What can we tangibly achieve together through the SPA is an important question.

I would like to outline 3 pillars where the SPA can have the biggest impact.

- ***Values we share***

The first pillar is our shared values.

Japan and the EU have an unshakable commitment to promote universal values, such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

Let me highlight a number of specific areas.

#### Rule of law

Both Japan and the EU share a strong interest in promoting the rule of law, in particular in global commons, which is the core principle in maintaining a stable international system.

As an example, freedom of navigation in both sea-lanes and airspace holds critical importance, not only for peace and security but also for unhindered economic activities.

#### Human Rights

The promotion of basic human rights has always been at the front and centre of our policy and we want to see this enshrined in the SPA.

The fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly lie at the very core of a society where each and every one of the people can have a fulfilling life.

In many corners of the world, such fundamental rights are not fully secure.

This is why we are so determined to enhance our cooperation with the EU in their promotion and practical advancement.

Japan and the EU have very similar voting behavior, notably on human rights issues in international fora such as the UN. And, this demonstrates why we would be a very effective partner in this field.

In this context, I will underline the particular importance we attach to women's empowerment and advancement of gender equality.

Prime Minister Abe, last autumn at the UN, has emphasized Japan's intention to enhance cooperation with the international community and its assistance to developing countries for women's empowerment and gender-equality.

These are areas which can be encapsulated in the SPA and bring about truly positive impacts.

- *Peace and Security*

The second pillar is peace and security, where we are cooperating in various scenes.

For example, our vessels operating off the coast of Somalia are in close coordination and communication with the EUNAVFOR Atalanta which shares the same goal of ensuring safe sea lanes.

In Afghanistan, both Japan and the EU have been providing assistance to the Afghan national police force to strengthen its capability to provide security to its own people. In fact, Japan and the EU are the second and third largest donors respectively when it comes to the assistance to the national police.

With regard to the situation in Syria, Japan and the EU are providing humanitarian assistance in joint endeavor of alleviating the regional impact of the conflict. Japan and the EU are two of the leading donors of humanitarian assistance alongside the US and Canada.

These examples are only the tip of the iceberg of what can be achieved when Japan and the EU work together.

The EU is currently working actively in the field through its CSDP missions in various corners of the world. Japan also has a long history of contribution to international peace mainly through participation in the PKO.

Also, new security challenges in the areas such as Space, Cyber and Non-proliferation is where Japan and the EU can mobilize our relative strong points.

Furthermore, pressing security challenges such as terrorism and internal conflicts requires a comprehensive solution. And this is exactly the field where EU and Japan has long experience and strong expertise. This makes it imperative that Japan and the EU work together closely.

- ***Sectoral cooperation***

The third pillar is sectoral cooperation.

The SPA will also encourage sectoral cooperation in a wide range of fields including people to people exchange, education, research and development, environment, human security, nuclear non-proliferation and energy and so on.

Let me give you an example on what such cooperation can bring.

There is a year-long programme called “Vulcanus in Japan” which offers language courses and traineeships in Japanese companies for European students.

The programme has been in place since 1997, and to this day many talented European students have taken advantage of this programme. Additionally, its sister programme, “Vulcanus in Europe” offers the same opportunities for Japanese students here in Europe.

Such programmes are significant for two reasons because, it broadens the foundation of our bilateral relationship and help both Japan and the EU in revitalizing our society and economy.

The basis and evidence for further cooperation is well established and now needs to be built upon for our mutual benefit.

#### **4. Concluding the agreements.**

I would like to conclude my remarks by summarizing our perspective on the SPA.

This endeavour is part of the long and meaningful process of finding a new paradigm to bring people together, give them hope and build a brighter future.

We have to make the agreement that lives up to the responsibility of our relationship.

Japan and the EU need an SPA which has a concrete commitment, allows concrete action and delivers concrete results.

We need an agreement that is substantial, but we also need to be swift. And this requires full-fledged support from both the citizens.

In this regard, I would like to once again appreciate the fact that MEP Peterle has taken the effort to bring this important event together.

I am very much looking forward to gaining hints and insights from all of you who have gathered today.

Thank you.