

Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Sonoura
Opening Remarks for Reception
Hosted by Consul General Horinouchi

1 . Opening

- Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for your attendance at today's reception.
- When I heard about this reception, I immediately made plans to be here. Consul General Horinouchi is a first-class career diplomat. I know him very well and have every confidence. Please feel free to consult him on any issue.

2 . Japan and California's Relationship

- Japan and California have been creating a tightly knit relationship. In the entire U.S., California has the largest community of Japanese-Americans living here; there has also been an expansion in the number of Japanese-American businesses. As you know, more than fifty-two hundred Japanese students have been studying here, and every year about six hundred-thousand Japanese

tourists visit California.

- Moreover, there have been close to one-hundred sister-city relations between the Japanese local governments and California. My hometown is Ichikawa City, which is located in Chiba Prefecture, and is the city sister with Gardena.

- I reaffirm Japan would like to continue to further promote an understanding of Japan in Los Angeles, surely one of the greatest cities on the West Coast.

- However, I'd like to express my concern that there is movement to create unnecessary tension between ethnic groups in the U.S. recently.

3 . Japan House

- There is an urgent need for Japan to strategically strengthen and improve our public relations and communication with other countries. Lately the Abe

Administration has started to consider founding the “Japan House,” which would allow people from around the world to acquire a “true and accurate” image of Japan through first-hand experiences. This first-hand knowledge of Japan will no doubt lead to a greater number of people becoming Japan-experts and pro-Japan groups in the future. The great city of Los Angeles is one of the candidate cities of this project. I will put all of my efforts into making this project come to life.

- I am well aware that the support from local communities is essential for the success of this project, and requires close work between us. On this occasion, we would be grateful to hear your insights not only on this potential Japan House project here in L.A., but also on ways we can be more effective in our communication with people of this great nation.

4 . In Closing

- The Japan-U.S. alliance is the foundation of Japan's foreign policy. The importance of our alliance has never been greater, and plays a vital role as the security environment in the Asia Pacific region has been increasingly harsh. We have been strengthening our collaboration on not only the cooperation in the Asia Pacific region but also shared global issues.

- Let's continue together to expand and strengthen the Japan-U.S. cooperation and proactively contribute to promoting peace and prosperity in the international community. I would like to close my remarks by thanking everyone here today for your continuous support and cooperation in these endeavors.

- Thank you for your attention.