

Video Message by Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

At the High Level Diplomatic Event to Commemorate the Year of Sugihara 2020
'BEYOND DUTY – VISAS FOR LIFE'

Your Excellency Mr. Linas Linkevičius, honourable guests,

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to celebrate the 80th anniversary of issuing the "Visa of Life" to Jewish refugees by Sugihara Chiune. I would like to offer my gratitude and respect to Lithuanian Government for hosting this international conference.

Sugihara Chiune, or Sempo, is known for saving the lives of many Jewish refugees by issuing transit visas to pass through Japan, while he was working at the Japanese Consulate in Kaunas. There were 2140 names on the list of the visas issued by Sugihara. As all family members were able to travel on the same single visa, the actual number of the lives saved is estimated to have been in the thousands.

In praise of this achievement, Sugihara was honoured at the Israeli Holocaust Memorial, *Yad Vashem*, with the title of 'Righteous Among the Nations.' As a Japanese citizen, I am extremely proud of this.

The Japanese Consulate in Kaunas, where Sugihara worked, is currently maintained and operated by the people of Lithuania as 'Sugihara House.' On the occasion of this year's 80th anniversary, stories about the relationship between Sugihara and Lithuania are being shared at grassroots level, too. Sugihara is recognised as one of the most important cornerstones for Japan-Lithuania relations today.

Sugihara's humanitarian decision reminds us that there are important values shared among us over time and across borders. Today, we are facing the unprecedented challenge posed by COVID-19. In this regard, let me stress that Japan is committed to work with the international community in order to maintain peace and prosperity of the world.

Thank you.