

Speech by Ms. Kamikawa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan  
at the 2024 National Rally to Demand the Return of the Northern Territories

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for your daily efforts in various activities to raise public awareness and rally public opinion toward the resolution of the Northern Territories issue.

The Northern Territories issue is the biggest concern between Japan and Russia. The government intends to maintain its policy of concluding a peace treaty through the resolution of the Northern Territories issue.

However, Japan-Russia relations remain in a difficult situation due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began in February 2022. It is an outrageous act that shakes the very foundation of the international order. Japan will continue to work with the G7 and the rest of the international community in implementing severe sanctions and so on.

At the same time, we will appropriately deal with issues that need to be addressed by Japan and Russia as neighbors, such as economic activities including the fishing industry as well as matters related to maritime security from the perspective of what is in Japan's national interests in the overall diplomacy of our country.

The resumption of exchange programs with the Four Northern Islands, including the visit to graves in Northern Territories, is one of the highest priorities in Japan-Russia relations. I have received sincere messages from former residents of the Northern Territories, whose average age is 88 years old. With a strong desire to respond to these sentiments, we will continue to strongly urge the resumption of such programs, with particular emphasis now on the visit to graves in the Northern Territories.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs, I will continue to exercise my leadership toward the resolution of the Northern Territories issue and the conclusion of a peace treaty. I would like to conclude my remarks by reiterating my sincere request for your continued support and cooperation.

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