

Foreign Minister Gamba's contribution to *Le Figaro*

<Title>

For the Peaceful Solution of Tensions in the China Sea

<Subtitle>

Japan's Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba emphasizes the importance of Japan-France relations in his talks with the French Foreign Minister during his visit to Paris

<Text>

Starting today, I will be visiting France, the United Kingdom and Germany to meet with the respective Ministers for Foreign Affairs. Taking this occasion, I would like to explain the principal objectives of my visit to France to the French readers.

The priority objective of my visit to France is to hold a foreign ministers' strategic dialogue with Minister of Foreign Affairs Laurent Fabius, a friend whom I have met and talked with on many occasions. Minister Fabius and I agreed in Tokyo to "elevate Japan-France relations to the supreme level." In the upcoming dialogue, we will discuss specific ways of cooperation to achieve this objective.

Japan and France share fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, market economy, respect for basic human rights and the rule of law. The peoples of our two countries also share delicate aesthetics, and thus hold deep respect and affection to each other's culture.

As both Japan and France possess highly advanced technologies and assume global responsibilities, the two countries are in the relationship of shared affinity and mutually complementary relations, both of which hold great potential for growth promotion and job creation through two-way investments, among others.

Two-thirds of France's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) exists in the Pacific Ocean, making France and Japan important neighbors in the Pacific. The strengthening of cooperation between the two countries in the Pacific is important not only for our nations but also for the international order of the seas.

The horizon for Japan-France cooperation is vast, including the promotion of human

rights and democracy worldwide, creation of new technologies in the fields of environment and energy, and cooperation for the development of developing countries including those in Africa. The establishment of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia is an excellent illustration of the efforts.

The promotion of the rule of law in the international community is the most suited field for cooperation between Japan and France. As Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda emphasized in his speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations in September, whatever difference in positions there may be between or among nations, all challenges must be peacefully resolved based on international law. Pursuing one's own way through violence or disregard of international rules is never justifiable, as is demonstrated by the present situation in the Middle East.

The French people may have strong interest in the recent rise of tensions over the Senkaku Islands, which are clearly a part of the inherent territory of Japan.

Japan will our cooperation with our neighboring countries for the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region. Japan does not wish the situation surrounding Japanese territory to negatively affect the regional situation. As a responsible regional player standing on the position which I have just stated, Japan intends to respond calmly and make efforts to ease the tensions.

I sincerely congratulate the European Union on the receiving of the Nobel Peace Prize, for the promotion of efforts for peace based on the lessons learned from the two World Wars. The EU would never have been realized without the French wisdom. Japan wishes to promote further cooperation with France, our Pacific neighbor, to build a rich and stable order in the Asia-Pacific region based on democratic values.