

## **Video message by Minister for Foreign Affairs HAYASHI at USJETAA JET35 Alumni Reunion**

Good afternoon. I am HAYASHI Yoshimasa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. At the outset, I would like to thank my good friend, Ms. Paige Cottingham-Streater, Mr. James Gannon and the organizers for arranging this special event. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to speak on behalf of the Government of Japan at the JET35 Alumni Reunion.

The JET Program commenced in 1987 and has since invited more than 70,000 participants from all over the world. Among the many participating countries, the United States has nearly 40,000 alumni and 20 regional branch offices of alumni across the United States. The alumni have made significant contributions as grassroots ambassadors to deepening mutual understanding between Japan and the United States. After finishing the JET program, many of these alumni have moved on to become prominent leaders in a wide range of fields including international relations, education, art, and business as highlighted during this event. Some alumni are working in the Japanese Embassy and Consulates across the United States. Also, many JET alumni continue to contribute to grassroots initiatives. We have seen the power of those initiatives many times –one notable example is that after the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011, US JET alumni gathered and raised donations to support recovery efforts in Tohoku. It gave us the courage to stay resilient, and we will never forget such an act of friendship. I wholeheartedly thank you all for your service and support to Japan over many years.

It is truly remarkable that participants today span generations, from those in their 20s who recently returned from Japan to ones who participated in the predecessor program, the Monbusho English Fellows Program back in the 1980s.

I would like to express my appreciation to all the alumni. You have provided students and the communities in which you lived in Japan with the opportunity not only to learn English, but also to encounter a world beyond Japan's borders, full of different cultures, ideas, and people. I sincerely hope, through this reunion, JETs from different generations will come together to celebrate a bright future of our important bilateral relations bar none.

Thank you very much.