

令和4年度天皇誕生日祝賀レセプションでの林外務大臣挨拶

Excellencies, distinguished guests, today I am honored to have you join me in celebrating the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor. This year, for the first time in four years, with all possible measures against infection having been taken, I have decided to resume our normal practice and am delighted to welcome members of the diplomatic corps and other eminent guests to this gathering. It gives me great pleasure to celebrate such an auspicious occasion with you all together.

Tomorrow His Majesty will celebrate his 63rd birthday. Physical contact was restricted for a long time due to the ramifications of COVID-19, but since last year, His Majesty the Emperor and Her Majesty the Empress have deepened their engagement with the people by participating in a variety of domestic events – always, of course, following a strict protocol to guard against infection.

In addition, His Majesty also devoted himself to deepening and enriching friendship and goodwill with other countries and regions last year. For instance, His Majesty visited the United Kingdom with Her Majesty in September and also held audiences for esteemed guests from 16 countries and international organization who were visiting Japan. I am truly delighted with this, and would like to join you in wishing His Majesty the Emperor a very happy birthday.

At present, the international community is at a turning point in history. The free and open international order based on the rule of law that supported peace and prosperity in the post-Cold War era is facing serious challenges as the balance of power undergoes historical changes and geopolitical competition intensifies.

Against this backdrop, this year Japan holds the G7 Presidency and has been granted a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. Last month, I visited the UN Headquarters in New York and hosted an open ministerial debate at the Security Council. At that meeting, I called for "uniting for the rule of law" and was able to gain the support of many countries.

Last weekend, I visited Germany to host the G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting and also attended the Munich Security Conference. Tonight, I will leave for New York to participate in an emergency special session of the UN General Assembly and the Security Council ministerial debate on the one-year anniversary of the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Thus, in close cooperation with other nations around the world, we will further promote the rule of law in the international community as well as a free and open Indo-Pacific region, and will continue to work for the realization of peace and prosperity in Japan and throughout the world.

We will continue to develop Japanese diplomacy with the following three forms of determination at the heart and by maintaining a balanced and stable posture with high responsiveness: (1) the determination to fully uphold universal values, (2) the determination to fully defend Japan's peace and security, and (3) the determination to lead the international community in facing global issues.

Now allow me to introduce to you our State Minister for Foreign Affairs and Parliamentary Vice-Ministers for Foreign Affairs, all of whom bear responsibility for Japan's diplomacy together with myself:

- Mr. YAMADA Kenji, State Minister for Foreign Affairs;
- Mr. AKIMOTO Masatoshi, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs;
- Mr. TAKAGI Kei, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs; and
- Ms. YOSHIKAWA Yuumi, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs

Please note that Mr. TAKEI Shunsuke, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, is currently on an overseas business trip.

Today, I would like to invite everyone to enjoy tasty dishes that incorporate various products from disaster-stricken areas such as Tohoku and Kumamoto. We will also serve you a wide selection of sake with distinctive character, including varieties from Yamaguchi, my home prefecture, and 20 brands of sparkling sake provided by the Awasake Association. We hope you will enjoy them.

Your Excellencies, I would now like to propose a toast to His Majesty's continued good health, to the prosperity of the Imperial Family, and to the good health of everyone present here this evening. Considering the current situation with COVID-19, please make your toast silently.

Please join me, then, in this quiet toast – Kanpai!