

令和5年度天皇誕生日祝賀レセプションでの上川外務大臣挨拶

(2月14日(水) 18:30-20:00)

Excellencies, distinguished guests, today I am honored to welcome you here to join me in celebrating the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor.

Continuing on from last year, it gives me great pleasure to celebrate such an auspicious occasion together with you all.

On February 23, His Majesty the Emperor will celebrate his 64th birthday.

During the past year, as the symbol of the State and of the Unity of the People of Japan, His Majesty the Emperor, together with Her Majesty the Empress, has been dedicated to the country and its people on a daily basis, sharing their joys and sorrows.

Since the Noto Peninsula Earthquake that occurred on New Year's Day,

Their Majesties have been caring for the victims and have been devoted to the earliest possible recovery.

Immediately after the earthquake and tsunami, we received warm messages of sympathy and generous offers of assistance from many people across the world as well as ambassadors present here today.

As Minister for Foreign Affairs, I would like to once again express my heartfelt gratitude.

Last year in June, His Majesty visited Indonesia with Her Majesty the Empress as his first goodwill mission to a foreign country since his accession to the throne.

In November, on the occasions of official visits by the presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Vietnam and their wives to Japan,

His Majesty invited them respectively to a luncheon at the Palace for the first time in four years.

I am truly grateful to see that His Majesty has been actively engaged in international goodwill.

And I would like to join you in wishing His Majesty the Emperor a very happy birthday.

Today, the world is at a turning point in history, as the balance of power in the international community is rapidly changing and movements continue to challenge the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Furthermore, this year, there will be one of significant elections in various parts of the world, which are expected to bring about major changes in international relations.

Against this backdrop, Japan will continue to promote diplomacy to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law so that all people can enjoy peace and prosperity,

and to realize a safe and secure world where human dignity is protected.

To this end, cooperation with a wide range of partners, including allies and like-minded countries, is indispensable.

I myself visited Ukraine last month and witnessed with my own eyes the fresh scars of aggression.

This experience renewed my commitment to two principles: that we must never allow unilateral changes to the status quo by force,

and that we must work to ensure human dignity by protecting women and children, who are particularly vulnerable in war.

This visit further convinced me that we must work to ensure human dignity at all costs.

In our subsequent visits to European countries, the United States, Canada, and Türkiye,

we have confirmed the importance of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including on urgent issues such as support for Ukraine and response to the situation in the Middle East.

This year, Japan will hold the chairmanship of the OECD Ministerial Council.

In addition, Japan will host the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting, the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, and other important international meetings.

I also participated in the Ministerial Interim Meeting of the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting held in Fiji just the day before yesterday (12th).

Through these and other opportunities, I will do my utmost to further develop relations with many countries and regions,

and to live up to the high level of trust and expectations that the international community has placed in Japan's statesmanship.

Today, we have prepared a delightful meal using high-quality and delicious ingredients from the Tohoku region, as well as sake from my home prefecture of Shizuoka.

We will also serve sake from the Noto Peninsula, which was impacted by the recent earthquake, and sparkling sake provided by the Awasake Association.

We hope you will enjoy these delicacies.

I now raise my glass to your good health, and I invite you all to join me in a toast:
to the continued health of His Majesty the Emperor and the prosperity of the Imperial Family.

Cheers!