

**From one island nation to another: Let's talk peace and prosperity  
by visiting Foreign Minister of Japan Mr. Fumio Kishida**

Last year Japan and New Zealand celebrated the 60th anniversary of the founding of diplomatic relations. As a result I am about to visit New Zealand, an important and friendly country, for the first time since being appointed Foreign Minister. I take this opportunity to share my thoughts on the future of the relationship between our two countries.

In addition to an excellent government-level bilateral relationship Japan and New Zealand have built up a number of multi-layered cultural interactions and people-to-people exchanges through trade, tourism, and sports. While our two countries might not be close geographically, we have formed such a close connection based upon our shared interests and values.

New Zealand is famous around the world for sports, including rugby and yachting. In Japan the black jersey and the haka of the All Blacks are appreciated not just by rugby fans, but by many. Japan's national sport is sumo, and we expect the yokozuna, the highest-ranked wrestlers of sumo, to embody the ideals of "spirit, technique and strength". The All Blacks are required to display the same ideals, and I believe that this, with their sportsmanship, is the reason for their popularity. This sportsmanship and love of sport typifies the bond we share.

We are both island nations that rely on the sea for sustenance, and regard maritime safety as vital. It is in our national interests to make the seas in the region completely open, free, and peaceful through assuring the rule of law at sea. As two countries connected by the Pacific Ocean it is important to reaffirm our co-operative strategic relationship which shares a vision of the Asia-Pacific region based on such universal values.

The strategic environment of the Asia-Pacific region is changing rapidly, and on this visit I hope to reaffirm to your Foreign Minister Murray McCully, Japan's wish to work together to realise a stable region and prosperity for both countries based on shared principles such as democracy and the rule of law. In addition, I hope to discuss with Minister McCully further co-operation on a range of topics,

including strengthening regional frameworks such as Apec, the East Asia Summit, and the Asean Regional Forum; our relationships with the Pacific Island nations; and a variety of global issues.

Since the end of World War II Japan has worked as a peaceful nation to promote co-operation and dialogue. We hope to continue to co-operate with New Zealand to develop regional and international rules. Japan's efforts to revitalise its economy are also intended to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and the international community.

Japan decided in March that it would enter the negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. The new economic framework which will be created through these negotiations, with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, will serve as an underlying basis for economic activities in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan, like New Zealand, aims for a comprehensive and high-standard agreement through these negotiations, and we hope to contribute towards the creation of these robust trade and investment rules. Through these agreements we intend to create and strengthen a free and open economic network in the Asia-Pacific region.

Our two countries, which have built up close, friendly relations, also experienced massive earthquake disasters weeks apart in 2011. We will continue to work to foster the bonds of friendship formed between our countries following these earthquakes, and to work together to contribute to disaster prevention and relief in the Asia-Pacific region.

I look forward to enhancing our strong, friendly, and co-operative bilateral relationship to promote peace and prosperity throughout the region.