

Statement by Mr Joe NAKANO
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs
At the Occasion of the 7th Japan-Australia Conference in Brisbane

4 November 2011

The Honourable Co-Chairpersons, Sir Rod Eddington and Mr Akio Mimura, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Joe Nakano, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Since the assumption of the present post in September, I have been paying particular attention to the Japan-Australia relationship. We all know our relationship is excellent, and yet we should not stay complacent. There are endless possibilities to broaden the bilateral cooperation, and one of them is to strengthen our ties with government of each state. With that spirit in mind, I already had pleasure of meeting in Tokyo with young Australian leadership from Western Australia and Northern Territory. I would certainly like to welcome guests from Queensland as well.

In broadening our cooperative relationship, the Japan-Australia Conference has been playing significant roles since its inception in 2001. Many of its proposals such as a joint study to strengthen the economic relations, 1.5 truck dialogue on security and Japanese language learning initiative, just to name a few, have led to concrete actions by both governments. Building upon such achievements, I hope that today's exchange of views will produce further results and help elevate the

relationship to a higher level.

After the end of World War II, the Japan-Australia relationship started to steadily take off as the Japanese investment in natural resources grew in Australia. Thanks to the tremendous and mutual efforts by preceding generations, this has culminated into stable and complementary economic partnership bound by trust and friendship that we witness today. The supply of natural resources and energy from Australia is indispensable for Japan's economic growth, while trade with and investment from Japan is greatly contributing to Australia's growth.

We should not take this partnership for granted. We should move forward. In this regard, the early resumption of the Japan-Australia EPA negotiations and our efforts to come to an agreement are vital as stated in the recent joint statement by the Japan-Australia Joint Business Conference. The two governments are endeavouring to revitalise the negotiations. Moreover, as you may be aware, the intensive debate is in progress in Japan with regard to Japan's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations. After thorough discussions, we are going to make a decision soon. I hope that the members of this Conference will also discuss this matter in depth.

The Japan-Australia relationship has entered into a new phase. That is security cooperation. The achievements for the last decade are remarkable as evidenced by the commencement of Joint Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations (2+2), the signing of Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreement (ACSA) and the increasing number of joint military exercises. The trilateral cooperation that encompasses the US

is also expanding. Japan and Australia are now true strategic partners in the Asia-Pacific region.

Recent experiences have confirmed this strategic partnership.

Immediately after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami which struck Japan on 11 March, the government and people of Australia were very swift in extending the messages of sympathies and great amount of support to the affected people. Let me first express my heart-felt appreciation to you all.

We received a variety of assistance from great many countries. We are grateful to all of them. Among them, it was only Australia and the US that dispatched their armed forces to help search and rescue operations in the affected area. That was indeed a paramount example of our bilateral and trilateral security cooperation.

Furthermore, I wish to refer to Prime Minister Gillard's visit to Japan in April. She was the first foreign leader who visited the devastated area. She brought hundreds of Koala and Kangaroo dolls for children in Minami-Sanriku town. Her advisers were also handing out the dolls, but all the children were almost fighting one another to get one from Prime Minister herself. She was THAT welcomed. It is a heart-warming episode that symbolizes our friendship.

Japan is now making its utmost efforts to achieve a reconstruction that is open to the world. In this vein, I sincerely hope that the number of Australian visitors to Japan as well as the amount of

Japanese exports will soon be restored to or even exceed the levels before the disaster. I would appreciate if the members of this Council could discuss ways to achieve such goals.

Another pillar of the relationship is our cooperation on global issues including nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, anti-terrorism and climate change. Last September, Foreign Ministers Koichiro Gamba and Kevin Rudd co-chaired the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative in New York. Japan and Australia have been taking the lead of this initiative. I particularly thank Minister Rudd for his leadership.

What comes after all that good news?

Friends sometimes differ with each other and the whaling is one of such issues. We must make sure that this issue does not overshadow the good bilateral relationship. I also wish to mention that the two governments share the position in opposing the maritime violence.

Last but not least, I would like to underline the importance of cultural and educational exchanges. The governments represent only a small portion of this rich relationship. Intellectual vigour of people of the two countries moves the relationship forward. I look forward to your discussions at this Conference.

Thank you for your attention.