

**Message from H.E. Mr. Katsunobu Kato, Minister in charge of the Abduction Issue, on the occasion of the Imperial Decoration Conferment Reception for The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2017 at the Residence of the Consul-General of Japan**

I wish to renew my sincere congratulations to the Honorable Michael Kirby, former Chair of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK for the conferment of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star.

Mr. Kirby kindly visited Tokyo, together with Mr. Marzuki Darusman of Indonesia, former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, at the beginning of last May, in order to receive the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star from Prime Minister Abe at the Imperial Court. Mr. Kirby graciously delivered a commemorative lecture titled “A reflection on Abduction & North Korea 2017”.

Members of abductees’ families greatly appreciated the reunion with Mr. Kirby held when he visited Tokyo in May and they were encouraged by his strong words of resolution to continue to engage in issues of human rights violations in North Korea, including the abduction.

Mr. Kirby has revealed the reality of grave human rights violations which were hidden behind the dark veil of that totalitarian country, even in these modern times, and by pursuing accountability for such human rights violations, he presented ways to restore the values of fundamental human rights with which every person is equally endowed.

I would like to pay tribute to the achievements by Mr. Kirby once again, as he has helped shed light on those who are suffering due to the horrific human rights situation in North Korea, including Japanese abductees who have been captive for 40 years.

The achievements of Mr. Kirby assure the recognition that Australia is an indispensable friend of Japan. On behalf of the Japanese people I sincerely express profound gratitude to him. I hope Mr. Kirby continues to provide assistance to tackle the human rights situation in North Korea, including the earliest possible return of all the victims of abductions. I also sincerely wish him continued good health.

28<sup>th</sup> June 2017  
Katsunobu Kato  
Minister in charge of the Abduction Issue