

Welcome Remarks by Consul-General Kiya  
**National Day Reception on the occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday**  
**2 March 2022**

- Your Excellency the Governor and Mr Wilson
- Minister Couré representing the Premier
- Ministers and Parliamentarians
- Chief Justice and Honourable Justices
- Mayors and Councillors
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

1 Introduction

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you all to my residence despite this severe weather.

At this reception, we celebrate the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, who turned 62 on 23 February.

Did you know that his very first overseas trip was to Australia, including Sydney and Uluru, in 1974 when he was 14 years old?

In 2002 His Majesty came to Sydney again aged 42, this time as Crown Prince with Princess Masako, visiting the Sydney Children's Hospital, Northbridge Primary School and Taronga Zoo.

2 Bilateral and Quad meetings

20 years have passed since then, and this year so many events have already taken place.

Prime Minister Kishida planned to visit Sydney at the beginning of this year. We worked over Christmas and the New Year, but the visit was withheld due to the rise of Omicron in Japan.

A virtual Japan-Australia Summit took place instead, and our two leaders signed the Reciprocal Access Agreement, elevating our security and defence cooperation to a new level.

Last month, Australia hosted the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Melbourne, and by mid-year, we are expecting the Quad Summit in Japan.

Japan and Australia are now working together toward the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific".

What is currently taking place in Ukraine is extremely serious. It shakes the foundation of international order not only in Europe but also in Asia. Japan is making efforts to improve the situation in cooperation with the international community, standing with Ukraine and its people.

Such developments demonstrate that we have no time to waste on our front. These days, security, economy and technology are even more interlinked.

### 3 Energy and Decarbonisation

One of the major challenges we are facing is energy and decarbonisation.

In late January, I visited the Hunter region with Ambassador Yamagami. Hunter Hydrogen Hub was developing. A Japanese company, Idemitsu, long engaged in coal mining, is now joining this new initiative.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) will provide Snowy Hydro's Hunter Power Project with two new gas turbines which can use hydrogen mixed with natural gas. Commercial operations will start as early as 2023.

In Orica's ammonia plant, an Australian start-up MCI, which has investment from Japan's Itochu Corporation, plans to set up a demonstration plant to capture CO2 to be used for making construction materials. It is expected to expand in Japan.

As for the Northern Territory, INPEX recently announced its vision to start Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) at its Ichthys LNG project and to play a leading role to realize a Darwin CCS hub as it aims to expand its plant to increase LNG production.

Japan-Australia cooperation in "decarbonisation through technology" is already in action.

#### 4 Smart infrastructure and High-Speed Rail

Another frontier is smart infrastructure, and Western Sydney Development has great potential for collaboration with Japan to create a 22<sup>nd</sup> century city.

In November last year, Japan-Australia Infrastructure Networking Meeting was held. Know-how and technologies vigorously tested and proven in Japan were showcased. We should continue to work together to create and seize such opportunities.

You may know that Japan's bullet train, Shinkansen, was instrumental in spreading development benefits across Japan. It is my hope that High-Speed Rail will connect major cities and regions in NSW and Australia, solving housing problems and enabling regional development in one stroke.

## 5 Olympics and sports

These security and economic ties are built on people-to-people exchange, cultivating mutual understanding and trust. And sport is a great way to connect us.

Last year, Japan was greatly encouraged by the positive support and messages that the Australian Olympic Team gave us for Tokyo 2020.

Later this month, the Samurai Blue will face off against the Socceroos in the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers, further strengthening our ties.

## 6 Sister city relations

Sister city relations also foster our friendship. NSW is a sister state of Tokyo, and Sydney a sister city of Nagoya, both for around four decades.

My thoughts and condolences are with the people of Lismore suffering from the flood. You may know that Lismore and Yamato-Takada made the first ever sister-city relationship between Australia and Japan way back in 1963, even before I was born.

The Newcastle-Ube City exchange has been lively for more than 40 years, which led to a new campus of Nihon University opening soon. The relationship is expanding!

## 7 Tourism, food and culture

As we move to a Post-COVID era, the key driver to promote exchange is tourism. Many Australian travellers understand and appreciate Japan's regional diversities. That is why I am offering today food and drinks with specialties and ingredients from various regions of Japan. Please enjoy!

Even during lockdowns, Australians' interest in Japan was sustained. Last year, we organised Japanaroo, a Japan-Australia exchange festival online and in person. Many people took part in virtual tours to Japan as well as food and cultural events, contributing to multiculturalism in Australia.

8 Mr John Ajaka

Today, the Honourable John Ajaka, former President of the NSW Legislative Council and former NSW Minister for Multiculturalism, will receive the Order of the Rising Sun.

The Government of Japan recognises his great contribution to the promotion of bilateral ties and friendship between Japan and Australia. My predecessors and I have greatly benefitted from his support and advice to further advance our strong ties.

I was personally impressed by his remarks that Australia's real strength lies not underneath the ground, but rather in the people above with various heritages, connecting Australia with the rest of the world. I believe Japan is an integral part of Australia's strength. Indeed, so many Australians enjoy learning the Japanese language.

12 Conclusion

Let me conclude by expressing my great appreciation to all of you for gathering here.

Through my 35 years in foreign service, it has become my conviction that each and every one of us are making history. Individuals count.

And we cannot take the current excellent Japan-Australia relationship for granted. Let us elevate our cooperation to an even higher level.

I look forward to further working with you for ever stronger Japan-Australia ties for our mutual benefit and for the benefit of the world.

Thank you.

(End)