

Remarks by Consul-General Keizo Takewaka  
**Imperial Decoration Conferment Reception for the Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG**  
Wednesday 28th June 2017 at the Residence of Consul-General of Japan

---

Good evening,

It is my great honour to conduct this Imperial Decoration Conferment Reception for the Honourable Michael Kirby, former Chair of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), who is recognised with the award of The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star.

First of all, I wish to welcome all the guests, in particular, former Prime Ministers of Australia, the Honourable John Howard and the Honourable Tony Abbott, who are kindly here to celebrate this special occasion with the Honourable Michael Kirby. We witness the recognition of the Honourable Michael Kirby's outstanding achievements and contributions to stronger solidarity between Australia and Japan.

As you are aware, the Honourable Michael Kirby has had many remarkable experiences, even before assuming the Chair of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), such as former Justice of the High Court of Australia, and former Chancellor of Macquarie University.

The Imperial Decoration is one of the highest awards that Japan bestows and it is conferred upon exceptional individuals. Let me explain the major achievements for which Mr Kirby has been recognised with the award of the Imperial Decoration, The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star.

The Honourable Michael Kirby, as the Chair of the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Human Rights, led the inquiry into the situation of human rights in North Korea from 2013 to 2014. Despite North Korea's non-cooperation, the COI conducted detailed investigations through public hearings in Seoul, Tokyo, London and Washington, D.C. as well as other numerous interviews with victims and other witnesses.

In the course of investigations, Mr Kirby and the COI visited Japan in August 2013 in order to conduct hearings of the abduction issue, by taking testimony from the families of abductees, government officials and support groups.

After rigorous and extensive work, the Report of the COI was published in February 2014. This report includes six principal findings and a section of crimes against humanity, as well as concrete conclusions and recommendations.

This Report should continue to deserve the high attention of the international community in terms of the seriousness and urgency of human rights violations in North Korea. The Report mentioned specific references to the abduction issue including Japanese nationals, and advised that violations such as abductions might constitute 'crimes against humanity'. The COI's Report has led to greater understanding in the international community to work towards improving the situation of human rights in North Korea.

Even after his role as COI Chair was accomplished, Mr Kirby continued to be involved in the issue; he participated in symposia organised by the Japanese Government in September 2014 and December 2015 regarding the situation of human rights in North Korea, including the abduction issue of Japanese nationals. He also joined a UN Human Rights Council panel discussion on the same matter in September 2014.

We would like to commend Mr. Kirby for having continuously striven to increase the international community's awareness of the matter. Just recently he addressed the grave human rights violations in North Korea in a speech titled "The Dangers of North Korea: Don't Forget the Denial of Human Rights" at the Sydney Institute on 21 June, in which Mr. Kirby emphasized the abduction issue.

To conclude, I would like to once again express our sincere congratulations to the Honourable Michael Kirby on his conferment. I hope that as one of the best friends of Japan, he will continue to enlighten us leading to stronger solidarity among us and greater momentum to address the human rights situation in North Korea, including the abduction issue.

Thank you.