23 February 2021

**A message from the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney Mr KIYA Masahiko
on the occasion of the 61st Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor**

On the occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's second birthday since His Accession to the Throne, I would like to convey my heartfelt congratulation v s to His Majesty from Sydney, Australia. Last year, there was great sadness as many precious lives were lost due to the bushfire disaster in Australia and the COVID-19 pandemic around the world. The Government of Japan will do its utmost to address various challenges so that this year may be a wonderful one for Japan, Australia and the world.

As "Special Strategic Partners", both countries continue and strengthen close dialogue and cooperation. In November last year, the Japan-Australia Summit Meeting was held when Prime Minister Scott Morrison became the first foreign leader to visit Japan after Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide took office. Earlier in October, Foreign Minister Marise Payne visited Japan for the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Also, in the same month, Defence Minister Linda Reynolds visited Japan for the Japan-Australia Defence Ministers' Meeting.

In the economic arena, the Japan-Australia relationship is developing steadily, including in the "green" and "digital" sectors, which are key driving forces of future growth. After the Japan/Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry Economic Mission visited Sydney in February 2020, there have been positive developments, including the business webinars with NSW Minister for Investment Stuart Ayres and NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian, in July and November respectively, as more Japanese companies have signed MoUs with the NSW Government. In the Northern Territory, cooperation is being promoted in order to further strengthen economic ties, building on the Ichthys LNG Project which began operations in 2018. One such example took place in October last year, when I inspected planned project sites of an Australian company receiving Japanese investment, together with NT Chief Minister Michael Gunner and Deputy Chief Minister Nicole Manison.

Turning to culture and exchange, the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held this year from July to September. The Government of Japan is determined to host the Games as a symbol of humanity prevailing over COVID-19 and as a symbol of "global unity" delivering "hope" and "courage" to the world. Both Japan and Australia are great sporting nations, and I hope that the Games will be an opportunity for exchange with the Host Towns in Japan and for online exchange between Japanese and Australian schools. In addition, in March this year, we mark the 10th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake, and a commemorative event will also be held in Sydney. At the time of the earthquake, Japan received great help from Australia and warm exchange grew afterwards. Once again, I would like to express gratitude on behalf of the Government of Japan.

In Australia, there are more learners of Japanese on a per capita basis than in any other country. There is a high level of interest in Japanese culture and technology. It is wonderful to see Japanese taught by enthusiastic teachers at many schools in NSW and the NT. Furthermore, there are around 100,000 Japanese nationals living in Australia; after the United States and China, the third largest number of Japanese nationals living in any country outside Japan. Approximately 35,000 Japanese nationals live in Greater Sydney, making it home to the sixth largest Japanese community in the world. I will do my utmost to fully support the local Japanese community so that it continues to enrich Australia, which upholds multiculturalism, and works as a bridge between Japan and Australia, facilitating the development of both our countries.

I would like to work with you all to deepen Japan-Australia ties, across all fields, aiming to contribute not only to the peace and prosperity of Japan and Australia, but also of the entire world.