

Embassy of Japan in Australia

Remarks by Mr Sumio Kusaka, Ambassador of Japan to Australia

40th Anniversaries of the Signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Japan and Australia, and the Establishment of the Australia-Japan Foundation

Great Hall, Parliament House
Friday 14 October 2016

Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening and welcome to the reception to celebrate the 40th anniversaries of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Japan and Australia, as well as the establishment of the Australia-Japan Foundation.

On this occasion, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to the Australia-Japan Foundation for its efforts over the past four decades in promoting exchange between our two countries. The enduring friendships and positive images we share of our respective countries are no doubt thanks to the support the Foundation has provided to a number of projects over the years.

To celebrate this milestone in relations between Japan and Australia, I am proud to welcome inspirational Japanese pianist, Mr Nobuyuki Tsujii as part of our gathering tonight. An outstanding musician with formidable technique and a natural gift for the piano, Nobu has earned international recognition for the passion and excitement he brings to his performances.

The young, gifted Nobu represents how far our relationship has grown; we now have opportunities to showcase and share our talent to inspire one another, and it is a true testament to our diverse mutual interests.

Nobu's achievements are remarkable and I believe that we, both Japan and Australia, can find inspiration in his sheer determination and self-belief as we take our relationship forward and beyond. I sincerely hope you enjoy Nobu's first performance in Australia.

This year marks 40 years since the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed in Tokyo in 1976 by prime ministers Malcolm Fraser and Takeo Miki. The Treaty was born out of a wish to expand on Japan-Australia relations beyond our economic partnership in the early 1970s.

Our economic ties had gathered momentum with the Commerce Agreement of 1957, which established a major trading relationship between Japan and Australia after WWII. This Basic Treaty

was also a ground-breaking achievement for our two countries. It represented closer cooperation and extensive links, including between people and cultural exchange.

Japan and Australia were once fierce adversaries and the events of World War II influenced social and political perceptions for years to come. Nonetheless, both Japan and Australia saw a clear recognition of the necessity to embrace a new era of forging closer ties. Japan's rapid rise as an economic powerhouse together with Australia's post-World War II economic growth and success as a multicultural society facilitated what I believe to be a 'miracle reunion' between our two countries with shared values. It brought together elements of our burgeoning relationship to focus on commonalities and complementarities.

It is my great pleasure to celebrate the 40th anniversaries together with Prime Minister Turnbull, who has graciously taken the time out of his busy schedule to join us this evening. In the space of one year, Prime Minister Turnbull has met with Prime Minister Abe on three separate occasions, once during his first official trip to Japan.

This is a clear indication of the hope for the future of bilateral relations that our two leaders share. We are incredibly grateful for Prime Minister Turnbull's efforts to continue the tradition of furthering relations between our two countries.

Japan is now Australia's third largest trading partner and our trade and investment ties are steadily expanding. The Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement – a natural extension of the Basic Treaty – is delivering substantial benefits to both the Japanese and Australian markets.

Our two countries share extensive community and cultural ties. More and more Japanese and Australians are living and visiting our two respective countries, and the Working Holiday agreement – another direct result of the Basic Treaty – has allowed young Japanese and Australians to gain a greater understanding of each other's culture and way of life.

Our relationship over the decades has also seen staggering growth in scientific and technological areas as well as in exchange across the sporting arena. This includes Japan's participation in Super Rugby as well as the historic cooperation agreement signed by our national soccer leagues. Only this week did the Samurai Blue and Socceroos face off in the World Cup qualifier in Melbourne.

Despite the friendly rivalry between our two sporting nations, I left wondering if I should have worn a two-sided soccer jersey; Japan on one side and Australia on the other so that I could support both teams diplomatically. From this perspective, it was indeed fitting that the end result was a tie after a hard-fought, 90-minute match.

In times of need, our two countries have stepped up to the plate in disaster response and humanitarian relief. Just a few examples of our joint cooperative assistance include the disaster relief operations following Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, and Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu. And we must not forget Australia's generous support in the aftermath of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

Japan and Australia share a 'special strategic partnership, which is a clear indication of our countries' shared commitment to democracy, human rights, the rule of law, as well as the common interests arising from our bilateral relationship. Japan and Australia are doing a great deal together

to tackle the challenges in creating and maintaining a more stable and prosperous Asia-Pacific region.

Looking back over the past 40 years, we should be very proud of what we have achieved together. It brilliantly demonstrates how our relationship has grown and expanded into one of the world's most successful relationships based on mutual trust and respect. The Basic Treaty was a sign of optimism shared by our respective governments four decades ago; an optimism that remains undiminished to this very day.

Our relationship has grown enormously and I firmly believe that this Basic Treaty will continue to provide the bedrock from which we will further strengthen our robust and multifaceted relationship. Here is to another prosperous 40 years for Japan and Australia.

Thank you.