

Ambassador's Message No.50 ( Foreign Minister Bishop attends Japan Update 2017)

13 September 2017

Dear Friends,

On Tuesday 6 September, I attended the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Japan Update at the Australian National University. This symposium on Japan is hosted by the Australia-Japan Research Centre (AJRC) and the ANU Japan Institute. Under the theme of 'seeking new directions', this year's symposium included discussions and presentations on Australia-Japan relations, the Japanese economy, Japan's foreign relations in the region, and innovation.



This year we were very honoured to have the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs give the keynote speech, which was chaired by Professor Brian Schmidt, Vice Chancellor of ANU. For approximately 20 minutes, Minister Bishop gave a positive and inspiring reflection on Japan-Australia relations, by firstly acknowledging Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's support for ANU during his official visit to Australia in 2014 where he announced a \$1 million program to support the Australia-Japan Research Centre. The Foreign Minister stated that Japan-Australia relations reached a significant milestone this year with the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Commerce Agreement between our two countries, suggesting that its rather simple title "doesn't do justice to its importance". In the context of the Asia-Pacific region, Minister Bishop affirmed Japan's position as Australia's "closest Asian strategic partner" and that our voices "matter greatly and are especially important at the present time". Concluding her address, Minister Bishop

congratulated ANU on the success of Japan Update, stating that “both our countries benefit greatly from the interaction”. I am sure the presence of Minister Bishop was encouraging for both myself and the leading Japan experts attending Japan Update.

[\(Full text of the Foreign Minister’s speech\)](#)



In my vote of thanks, I expressed my gratitude to Minister Bishop for taking the time to attend Japan Update and that her presence at the event was a true testament of the Australian government’s view of our relationship as critically important. We all understand that our strong relationship is more important than ever to maintain a stable and prosperous region. I also took this opportunity to affirm Japan and Australia’s leading role in pushing for TPP11 and that a major milestone of cooperation in defence is our cooperative efforts to sign the Reciprocal Access Agreement. In light of recent events in our region, I stated that North Korea’s hydrogen bomb testing and ballistic missile firing are totally unacceptable.

[\(Full text of my vote of thanks\)](#)

I would like to reiterate my appreciation for ANU in creating a space for an informative and stimulating discussion on Japan. Since my arrival in Australia as Ambassador of Japan, I have actively promoted public diplomacy through academia. I endeavour to engage in dialogue and exchange views with academics, researchers, and of course students through speaking opportunities at leading Australian universities. I will continue to work assiduously to promote the importance of Japan-Australia relations as well as Japan’s position in global affairs through these interactions here in Canberra and around the country.



(from left : AJRC Co-Director Dr. Shiro Armstrong, ANU Vice Chancellor Pro. Brian Schmidt, Foreign Minister Bishop, Myself)

Yours sincerely,

/S/

Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia