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Dear friend of Japan,

I hope this e-mail finds you well.

As this is my first message to you, please kindly allow me to introduce myself. My name is Sumio Kusaka, and I am the newly appointed Ambassador of Japan to Australia. Thirty-four years ago, my first posting overseas was here in Canberra where I stayed for two years. Therefore, this is my second posting to Australia. A lot has changed since then, particularly Japan and Australia's relationship growing much closer than ever before. I am extremely pleased to see that intimate bilateral relations exist today between our two countries than thirty-four years ago.

Japan and Australia's relationship has strengthened exponentially, so much so that it can be said that our relationship has entered a 'new era' based on our strategic partnership, particularly on account of Prime Minister Abbott's visit to Japan, and Prime Minister Abe's visit to Australia last year. Several concrete results have been achieved thanks to these visits, such as the conclusion of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JAEPA) negotiations, the strengthening of defence and technology cooperation, the agreement of alternating reciprocal annual visits, and the promotion of youth exchange, to cite a few examples.

I have a personal connection to the JAEPA as I was the first negotiator representing Japan when negotiations began in 2007. So when the EPA came into effect in January this year, I felt a strong sense of achievement. At the same time, I sincerely hope that business relations between our two countries will be further enhanced through the EPA.

It is an absolute honour to assume the role of Ambassador of Japan to Australia at a time where Japan and Australia enjoy an unprecedented level of strong relations. With your kind help, I am determined to make every effort to further continue strengthening bilateral relations. I am very interested in meeting you in person so we can discuss various issues of our common interest.

On another note, I would like to share with you a couple of recent developments today. One is the visit of Prime Minister Abe to the United States (26 April-3 May) which we think marks a historic step forward in transforming the Japan-U.S. partnership. The other is an agreement on the new "Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation" (the new Guidelines) at the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (the so-called ministerial 2+2) in New York on 27 April. Although they are both events concerning Japan-U.S. relations, there are of some relevance to Australia which you may find of interest and I would just like to highlight key aspects of them.

In his recent trip to Washington, Prime Minister Abe had a meeting with President Obama on 28 April. The key message from the meeting is that Japan and the United States will work even closely together to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for the region and the world through

the U.S. Asia-Pacific Rebalance strategy and Japan's policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" based on the principle of international cooperation. The two leaders also agreed that Japan and the United States will enhance trilateral and multilateral cooperation among like-minded partners, which include Australia, in the process of expanding their global cooperation. The Joint Vision Statement as an outcome document of the meeting is attached for your reference.

On 29 April, Prime Minister Abe made an address at a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress entitled "Toward an Alliance of Hope," the first Japanese Prime Minister to do so since 1957. In this address, he mentioned that Japan supports the "rebalancing" effort by the U.S. in order to enhance the peace and security of the Asia-Pacific region, and in that context referred to the fact that Japan has deepened its strategic relations with Australia and India, and that Japan is enhancing cooperation across many fields with the countries of ASEAN and the Republic of Korea. The transcript of the address is also attached for your reference.

Lastly, I would like to touch upon new "Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation," which give a general framework and policy direction for the roles, missions, and ways of cooperation and coordination between Japan and the United States in all phases from peacetime to contingencies. The fact that a dynamic world requires a modern alliance is part of the reason for updating the Guidelines, but what I would like to stress is that under the evolving security environment, Japan will continue its path as a peace-loving nation in a consistent manner and that Japan will continue to contribute proactively to securing peace, stability and prosperity of the international community while also ensuring Japan's own security. In that context, the new Guidelines stress the importance of cooperation with regional and other partners, and the Ministers agreed to expand trilateral and multilateral cooperation, particularly with key partners such as Australia and the Republic of Korea, as well as ASEAN. We would like to continue to pursue closer cooperation with Australia on capacity building activities in Southeast Asia. Both the Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee and the new "Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation" are attached for your reference.

Looking forward to meeting you in person in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

/S/

Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia

[U.S.-Japan Joint Vision Statement](#)

["Toward an Alliance of Hope" \(April 29, 2015\)](#)

[Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee](#)