

Dear friend of Japan,

I hope this e-mail finds you well.

This week we have witnessed a great change in the government of Australia. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Mr Tony Abbott's time as Prime Minister of Australia.

During his term as Prime Minister, Mr Abbott visited Japan and welcomed Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Australia. A total of six Japan-Australia summit meetings were held, through which our strategic partnership has been greatly strengthened and promoted more than ever before.

On behalf of the government of Japan, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr Abbott's contribution to the development of Japan-Australia relations.

Here in the Asia-Pacific region, I believe that the importance of the Japan-Australia relationship will continue to increase under the new government. Both of our countries should make our utmost efforts to further strengthen and promote our close relationship.

This belief was addressed in recent remarks I made to my Australian colleagues. In my remarks, I spoke about the Japan-Australia partnership as well as the Peace and Security Legislation. The following is an outline of my remarks.

*There is no doubt that Australia and Japan are key economic partners in the region, but in addition to this, geographically the two nations are located in the north and south of the western part of the Pacific, like a pair of "bookends" on either side. I think Japan and Australia are more than economic partners. We are strategic partners in this region; a partnership on which we can cooperate in many respects.*

*Our two countries have enjoyed a very good relationship supported by our long-standing, mutually complementary economic ties. One remarkable development in our bilateral*

*relationship is the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement which came into force in January this year thanks to your support. This agreement provides valuable impact for both Japan and Australia. Our economic ties have expanded from the traditional trade of energy, mining and automobiles to a much wider one involving agribusiness, transportation, housing infrastructure and M&As.*

*Over the years, but especially since the EPA, Japanese companies have been very keen to find high quality investment opportunities outside of Japan, and Australia is a highly stable and attractive investment destination for them.*

*Regarding the topic of submarines, which is a very important topic for both our nations, I believe that if Japan is chosen as a partner—and we want to be chosen as a partner—it will be a huge step forward for our bilateral defence cooperation, as well as for our trilateral strategic cooperation with the U.S., as Japan and Australia are both allies to the U.S.*

*Japan will respond sincerely to the Competitive Evaluation Process and the Australian requirement to submit all three options; namely, Japan-built, Australia-built and Hybrid options. For each of the three options we will develop a package that will maximise the Australian industry involvement without sacrificing submarine capability, cost or schedule.*

*In the case of Japan, the whole process to respond to the CEP is managed under a close government-to-government consultation with the Australian side. In addition to the two prominent Japanese companies Mitsubishi and Kawasaki being fully involved, in our case, Australia has the total commitment of the Japanese government.*

*At present, the Government of Japan is putting its full efforts to Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security. Simply put, it is based on the underlying belief that 'no nation alone can maintain its own peace and security'. Therefore, there is a need to further strengthen the deterrence of the Japan-U.S. alliance.*

*Moreover, Japan must make a greater contribution to the international community. Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security is currently discussed at the House of Councilors. Once it is enacted, Japan will be able to cooperate more than before in various Peacekeeping Operations and activities by the United Nations. The range of activities in which Japan will be able to engage, will expand significantly however there will be no change in the basic position and posture that Japan has maintained over the past 70 years as a peace committed*

*nation. Certainly this is a manifestation of the policy of “Proactive Contribution to Peace” based on the policy of international cooperation.*

Yours sincerely,

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Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia