

Emperor's Birthday Reception  
Remarks by Consul General Jun Yamada  
Wednesday, December 9, 2015

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome you to tonight's reception honoring the birthday of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Japan. His Imperial Majesty will turn 82 on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. Let us humbly celebrate this occasion together and wish the Emperor many more happy years to come! I am sure this cordial and enthusiastic atmosphere we have here today will somehow be conveyed and felt at the Imperial Place in Tokyo, too.

This reception is also to express our sincere gratitude to all the friends of Japan in Northern and Central California for your wonderful support and favor through the past year.

Thanks to your contribution, the year 2015 has been so fruitful for California-Japan relations, and indeed for US-Japan

relations across the board. There was a visit by our Prime Minister, Mr. Shinzo Abe to San Francisco and the Bay Area in spring of this year, after 26 years' hiatus. In fact, his visit to Silicon Valley was the very first of its kind at that level in Japan's history - further testament to the fact that this area is regarded as the most crucial center of gravity in today's world!

Prime Minister's visit was a harbinger of many important and exciting prospects toward our common future: Japanese contribution to the Californian high-speed rail project, based on a perfect safety record for more than 50 years; growing cooperation between our two countries in the fields of climate change, life sciences, and innovation; and deepening of the US-Japan joint efforts in enhancing international security, including the cyber sphere. Following Mr. Abe's trip, the number of important visitors from Japan has been visibly growing. One of the largest Japanese business federations, Keidanren, sent a delegation with an unprecedented number of senior CEOs during the summer - another record to note.

This was amidst numerous visits by world-class talents in the fields of science, music, and art, including the latest J-Pop and culinary masters. And just over the past two months, no less than 20 members of the Japanese Diet set foot in my jurisdiction. This is a staggering number indeed, already comparable to such world capitals as Washington, D.C., London, or Paris.

Such mesmerizing acceleration of all these positive trends has not taken place without reason. The fact is that we are truly endowed with several assets unique to this place:

- 102 sister and friendship city relationships between California and Japan, Menlo Park and Bizen being the latest pair;
- the proud presence of a Japanese American community with its historical leadership in promoting minorities' rights which embodies the very spirit and value of American democracy based on diversity and harmony;

- proximity and immediacy - not only geographically but also spiritually - to the Asia-Pacific region which is destined to be the new center of growth and innovation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I wish to note here that the newly agreed upon Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement among 12 nations is yet another hope for an even brighter future for us all.

Against this background, Japan will host the G7 summit next year in Ise City in Mie Prefecture. We look forward to an effective and timely discussion among the leaders of advanced democracies to deal with so many serious challenges in today's world. In this context, too, US-Japan joint action will form the critical core of cooperation among all like-minded players of the world.

Ladies and Gentleman, once again please accept our sincere gratitude for your unwavering support of us! Let us renew our hope for an even closer and stronger relationship between California and Japan, and indeed the US and Japan, throughout 2016, in order to make this world a better place. Thank you very much for your attention!