

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all of you wonderful guests gathered here today on this occasion of our country's National Day Reception. It is very much my pleasure to celebrate our Emperor's health and long life with you again this year.

More than three years have now passed since I became Consul General of Japan here in Denver. I feel so privileged that during this time I have been able to meet many wonderful friends, and work together to further positive relations between the United States and Japan. The basic role of our Consulate is to provide Japanese government services for the people of this region and to promote overall relations between Japan and the United States. We would not be able to do this effectively without the high level of interest and generous help that we receive from all of you. I'd like to take this opportunity to honestly express my thanks to each of you once again for your steady support of our activities and programs.

As I mentioned, promoting strong relations in various fields between Japan and the Rocky Mountain region here in the United States is a very important mission for our Consulate.

Since the nonstop flight service to Tokyo from Denver began last year, the circumstances for potential strengthening of economic relations between the Rocky Mountain region and Japan have improved tremendously. In this situation, I am glad to say that many cities and counties in this area including Denver are making great efforts to promote economic exchange between their sister cities in Japan, and especially the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation has been promoting ties with Japan as a top priority. I hope that our good cooperation has and will bring massive benefits for all of us.

The alliance between our two countries is invaluable, and bound together by strong ties of friendship. Based on our common values of democracy, a market economy

and the rule of law, we continually strive towards the realization of peace and security in international society. Furthermore, together Japan and the United States comprise about 30% of the world economy and maintain extraordinary economic influence in global activities. It goes without saying that strengthening the cooperation between our two countries is vitally important for creating a society where all peoples on earth can live in peace and prosperity.

Under Japan's pacifist constitution, we have consistently sought world peace for the seventy years since the end of World War Two. Even now we shall not waiver from this position. However, world affairs are changing quickly, and to ensure peace and stability amid shifting global conditions, it is urgent that we respond to new security challenges. The people of Japan love peace. As a peace-loving country, our current administration has taken up a philosophy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" and increased its efforts in this area accordingly. The strengthening of the alliance between us is at the core of these efforts.

Colorado is the proud home of NORTHCOM, NORAD, the 460th Space Wing, and the US Air Force Academy. I believe that fostering trust and friendship with these US military institutions is a very important mission of the Consulate. To the many military personnel and to all of our guests here tonight, I am also proud to express our commitment to work tirelessly toward deepening the Japan-US alliance.

The idea of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" is not limited to security matters alone. More broadly, this policy builds on our country's values for peace, equality, and democracy while aiming to ultimately realize a more fair and just society in the international arena.

Under these principles, one of our most important objectives is to build "a society in which all women can shine". In the world today, people are often denied access to basic things such as education, medical care, and economic self-reliance, simply for being born female.

As a leader in the international community, the government of Japan will continue to partner with the United Nations and other organizations to stand together in protecting the honor and dignity of all women. This year at the General Assembly of the United Nations, Prime Minister Abe stated his belief that the creation of a society in which women shine does hold a key to changing society in its entirety.

Japan's basic stance is that we must attach utmost importance to advancements in government, economy, culture, and every area of international society, to carry out the empowerment of women in our own society.

I can say that during my three years here in Denver, I have worked firsthand with talented female leaders from many different sectors. This has served as a wonderful experience for me. To all the women here tonight: I encourage you to continue to enthusiastically strive for the deepening of friendship and strengthening of relations between our two countries. Moreover, let us all work together, not only for the good of Japan and the United States, but for the advancement of all nations.

Thank you very much.