

Remarks - Consul General Ono  
Emperor's Birthday Reception  
Sheraton Hotel Denver  
December 3, 2012

Good Evening.

It is my great pleasure to host this special reception with all of you here tonight, in celebration of H.I.M. the Emperor's birthday, Japan's National Day. The Emperor this year will be 79 years old on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of this month, and we pray for his continuing good health.

Japan is still on its long path to recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of last year. Many serious challenges remain, but there has been a generous response and much assistance from areas such as this Rocky Mountain region and from throughout the international community. Japan is now moving forward in the process toward a complete recovery.

I would like to express my gratitude to the American people, especially to those in this great Rocky Mountain region. In our current reconstruction process, there is a conscious effort to create a region sensitive to the needs of an aging and shrinking population, and our efforts continue also toward creation of a progressive recycling-oriented society. Further, we are working towards maximizing our use of renewable energy technologies, and beginning to walk the path towards a cleaner planet. My country, in its quest to overcome this unprecedented disaster, is searching to help make the earth the place it is supposed to be.

Looking at the current state of Japan-U.S. relations, I recall new memories of various ceremonies across the U.S. commemorating this year as the Centennial anniversary of the gift of cherry blossom trees from Japan to the US, 100 years ago. Our own office cooperated in planting ceremonies of new cherry trees with many people in Denver, Colorado Springs, and Salt Lake City, including the Denver Buddhist Temple, Simpson United Methodist Church, and the Nisei Veterans Heritage Foundation. Several successful cultural events were carried out in conjunction with these symbolic commemorative plantings.

In opening the curtain to the next 100 years of Japan-US relations in this way, I fully anticipate the growing realization of mature civil societies throughout the international community. This shared aim of the Japan-America alliance is based on the strengthening bonds of common democratic and economic values that our people share.

Fittingly, in this year of commemoration, I was delighted to hear of the decision to begin a nonstop flight from Denver to Tokyo beginning in March next year. I must congratulate and express my respect for the many years of effort from so many people, including Mayor Hancock, to make this longtime cherished goal a reality. Further, I would also like to offer my sincere gratitude to the people of United Airlines, who made the important decision to operate this direct flight.

This offers an opportunity to bring a new dimension to Japan-US relations and a great new step to the Rocky Mountain region. In order to help make this new flight a successful and ongoing venture, our Consulate office is working in close cooperation with a variety of organizations, including the governments of Denver and Colorado as well as Denver International Airport.

What is most important is having the Japanese people know the attraction of the Rocky Mountain region and what it can offer. This alone will enhance person to person cultural exchange, as well as economic and business opportunities. Also, it is important that many Americans visit and learn of Japan too, as it progresses towards recovery, so that they know how beautiful my country is as well. To this end, our office will continue to strive and work together, in trust and cooperation, within many local sectors in the region.

Finally, although it may still be a bit early, I would like to express my extreme gratitude to all of you here tonight for your assistance with our efforts throughout the year. The main missions of the Consulate are to provide government services to Japanese nationals living abroad, to promote exchange between our country and the Rocky Mountain region, and to introduce Japanese culture with the aim of promoting mutual understanding between us.

Without the support and cooperation of the local community, we would not be able to properly accomplish these goals. Please be assured it is our intention to continue striving to be a bridge between my country and the Rocky Mountain region. I humbly ask for your continued support of our mutual prosperity, and thank you all very much for being here with us today.