

Remarks for H.E. Kaoru Ishikawa

National Day Reception

The Westin Ottawa

November 24, 2011

The Honourable Peter Gordon MacKay,

The Honourable Beverley Joan Oda,

The Honourable John Baird,

The Honourable John Duncan,

The Honourable Peter Penashue,

The Honourable Julian Fantino,

The Honourable Ted Menzies,

The Honourable David Tkachuk,

The Honourable Mike Wallace,

Your Excellencies,

Members of the diplomatic community,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen:

I would like to thank you all for joining me and my wife Masako today in tribute of the 78th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

For the people of my country, the birthday of His Majesty is a momentous occasion and takes place as the year draws to a close.

And, like many of the traditions celebrated throughout the world, this

is a time for happiness, a time for family, and perhaps most importantly, a time for reflection.

L'année 2011, malgré nous, est devenue l'année du défi, l'année de la réflexion et pourquoi pas l'année de l'espoir. Il faisait aussi froid qu'au Canada, le 11 mars dernier, la date à laquelle où le séisme puissant et le tsunami dévastateur ont frappé la côte nord du Japon. Des villes et des villages entiers ont été complètement balayés. D'innombrables familles ont été laissées sans abri. Et le nombre de décédés était inouï.

En effet, le 11 mars 2011, le Japon a fait face comme le disent certains, au plus grand défi dans son histoire depuis la fin de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale.

Today, eight months have passed since the disaster. And, in many ways, as quickly as time passes, time also heals and life moves on. In the affected region, many of the main roads and railways have reopened. Businesses and industrial facilities have resumed operations. And reconstruction efforts are underway to repair damaged infrastructure and create housing for residents. While there is still a large hill to climb – especially in the areas of building resilient

communities – the region and its residents are trying to return to a “sense of new normal.”

However, amidst the recovery and reconstruction, I humbly believe that there are many lessons to be learned, and there are certain things that we should not forget.

The sheer magnitude of the disaster reminded me of the need for balance. A balance between life and death, between Mother Nature and mankind, between humility and ambition, and a balance between tradition and innovation. To achieve this balance, we need not only the brilliance of the human mind and the wonders of science and technology, but also a resilient spirit and the adherence of core values that help build strong and sustainable communities – values such as volunteerism and compassion.

I have come to understand – now more than ever before – that these values are a part of Canada.

Tout de suite après le désastre, de nombreux pays dont le Canada sont venus prêter secours aux victimes. Le gouvernement fédéral a envoyé 25.000 couvertures thermales pour réchauffer les habitants affectés. Il a également donné des outils précieux tels que des dosimètres et des radiamètres portatifs pour aider les ingénieurs et les techniciens courageux qui s'attaquaient à la crise de la centrale nucléaire.

J'ai reçu des messages de soutien et de solidarité de la part du Gouverneur général, le très honorable David Johnston, de l'ancienne Gouverneure générale, la très honorable Michaëlle Jean, du Premier ministre, le très honorable Stephen Harper, d'ambassadeurs, de députés, de sénateurs, et de leaders municipaux et provinciaux. Aussi ont été apportées les pensée et les prières au peuple japonais par des canadiens de tous les coins et de toutes les générations. Vous avez généreusement offert le soutien à travers des organismes tels que la Croix Rouge canadienne, et je vous en remercie.

From the schoolchildren who folded thousands upon thousands of paper cranes to the Canadian veterans – whom I visited with yesterday – who gathered together to raise funds for the tsunami-affected Onagawa Bay, I am proud to tell you that the acts of compassion and volunteerism have re-inspired and re-ignited the same values in Japan.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Canada and Japan continue to share a strong relationship on many fronts. For instance, year 2011 marks the 25th anniversary of science and technology cooperation between our two countries. Under this framework, Japan and Canada are making steadfast progress in areas such as stem cell and nanotechnology research.

On the cultural and education front, eight thousand Canadians have participated in the Japan Exchange and Teaching program, teaching English in schools across Japan.

Et les liens économiques qui servent de fondement pour nos relations bilatérales seront renforcés davantage par l'étude conjointe Canada-Japon en vue d'un accord de partenariat économique. Messieurs les Premiers ministres Stephen Harper et Yoshihiko Noda ont tous deux réaffirmés leur engagement à cet égard.

Indeed, all of you in this room have played an invaluable role in strengthening the ties between our two countries. For this, I am humbly grateful and I look forward to working with you to ensure a bright future ahead.

Let us not forget the reason why we are here – to enjoy each other's company and to celebrate the 78th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Akihito, the 125th Emperor in an unbroken line of hereditary succession. Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress still fondly remember their wonderful visit to Canada in 2009, and the warm hospitality extended to them by all Canadians.

I am truly delighted to bring this celebration here to Canada, and I would like to thank you once again for joining us tonight.

I thank you for your kind attention.