

Address by Kenjiro Monji, Ambassador of Japan to Canada
On the occasion of 2017 Annual Meeting of NAJAS
(National Association of Japan America Societies)
(August 2, 2017, Toronto)

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the NAJAS for inviting me to the first NAJAS annual meeting held in Canada, hosted by its Canadian member, the Japan Society, Toronto. I am delighted to be able to welcome the American members of NAJAS to Canada as Ambassador of Japan to Canada. During my diplomatic career, I have worked closely with the U.S., mainly in the areas of security and defense, and cultural and educational exchanges.

I would also like to praise NAJAS for its continued efforts over many years to enhance Japan-U.S. relations through educational, cultural and business programs.

I think it truly timely to hold this year's NAJAS meeting in Canada, as there has been a growing attention to Canada in the U.S. since the beginning of this year. I see many long articles on Canada in major US newspapers recently. In Japan as well, people seem to be taking more interest in Canada, especially as a good and safe destination for tourism. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of promoting trilateral cooperation among Japan, Canada and the U.S.

But, let me first touch upon Japan-Canada relations for the better understanding by our American friends.

Japan and Canada have enjoyed excellent relations over the years, but the situation is totally different compared with the Japan-U.S. relationship, which is much more deeply rooted in society. After my arrival in Canada a bit over two years ago, I was shocked to discover that we were not at all at the

zenith of our relationship. Japan had been the number 2 trading partner to Canada until 2002. Recently Japan has been lagging behind in the 5th place, after the US, China, Mexico and the UK. The number of Japanese visitors to Canada peaked in 1997, reaching 720,000, while the number in 2016 was around 320,000, less than half of the record figure. Japanese and Canadians have a very good impression of each other's country, but we do not know each other well when it comes to the details. I was disappointed, but at the same time, I took this fact as an indication of the huge potential of further expanding our relations once again.

Now there is good impetus to strengthen our bilateral partnership. In May 2016, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited Japan as his first official visit to an Asian country and agreed with Prime Minister Abe to create a "New Era for Canada-Japan Cooperation," focusing on economic partnership, security cooperation, and cultural and youth exchanges.

In the economic field, the two Prime Ministers agreed to revitalize the 40 year old Joint Economic Committee and identified five priority areas of cooperation, namely, infrastructure, energy, science and technology cooperation, improvement of business environment and promotion of investment, and tourism and youth exchanges. Both Governments are working closely with the private sector.

In the area of security cooperation, we now have various frameworks for dialogue, such as the Deputy Minister's level 2+2 meeting, the Symposium on Security, and others. The two countries are about to sign an Acquisition and Cross Service Agreement (ACSA) that will facilitate cooperation between the Japanese Self Defense Forces and the Canadian Armed Forces. Canada is now dispatching two frigates to the Asia-Pacific region.

The third pillar of the “New Era for Cooperation” is cultural, educational and people-to-people exchanges to promote mutual understanding between our two peoples. In this area I think we have a lot to learn from the experience of NAJAS, especially on how to firmly establish grass roots level cooperation.

I’m sure you are all aware of the JET Programme, which is much appreciated in the U.S. Canada is also an active participant in the JET Programme and now sends about 200 young people to Japan each year, the second largest number after the U.S. As of this year 8,800 young Canadians have gone to Japan on the Programme. In addition, the number of Japanese students studying in Canada is increasing thanks to agreements between Canadian and Japanese universities.

This year, 2017, is the 150th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada, and next year, 2018, will mark the 90th anniversary of Japan-Canada diplomatic relations. Japan and Canada intend to celebrate these special occasions with many memorable cultural and other events.

Now I would like to move on to Japan-Canada-U.S. trilateral cooperation. Our three countries share fundamental values, such as democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. We all belong to G7, APEC and G20, and have been closely cooperating to pursue peace and prosperity around the world. Another important consideration is that both the U.S. and Canada are Atlantic as well as Pacific nations.

The U.S. is the most important ally and partner for both Japan and Canada, and the value of the Japan-U.S. and Canada-U.S. relationships, which have been always strong and solid, cannot be overstressed. Therefore, until last year, I had been advocating strengthening Japan-Canada ties, which constitute the weakest side of the Japan-Canada-U.S. triangle. I am glad that

our two Prime Ministers, Mr. Abe and Mr. Trudeau, now enjoy an excellent personal relationship. I attended all three meetings between them and could see that they truly have a good chemistry. It is also encouraging that our two leaders have succeeded in establishing good personal relationships with President Trump in the early stage of the new American administration.

However, due to the recent change of course in certain U.S. policies, there seems to be some new developments appearing in regards to international relations, as demonstrated during the G7 and G20 meetings.

Today, the issue of utmost priority for the Canadian Government is to manage well its relations with the U.S. All the resources and efforts of the government are being directed toward this objective. The NAFTA renegotiation will start in just two weeks. There are other pending issues with the U.S. such as softwood lumber, the dairy industry, and steel and aluminum. The rest of the world, including Japan will be carefully watching and following the development of the NAFTA renegotiation.

Japan will make every effort to maintain and strengthen the Japan-U.S. Alliance in both economic and security areas. Japan attaches much importance to the TPP and will pursue the so-called TPP 11, into which the U.S. can be welcomed back in the future. Japan hopes to work closely with Canada to promote free trade.

Under these circumstances, I believe that closer cooperation between Japan and Canada will have much more bearing than simply strengthening the weaker side of the triangle. As I have mentioned, Japan and Canada share fundamental values and our two countries are pursuing the same policy objectives with respect to a number of global issues, such as the promotion of free trade, the fight against the climate change, respect for the rule-based international order, and international coordination through the multilateral

approach, on all of which the U.S. may now have slightly or even largely different opinion. This is the reason I believe that a deeper, broader and closer Japan-Canada partnership could play an important role in making the triangle much stronger and healthier for not only for Japan and Canada, but for the U.S. and the world as well.

The trilateral cooperation should be pursued in the Asia-Pacific region as well as globally, and should cover a wide range of areas including economy, diplomacy, international security and culture.

Let me look at international security as an example of cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan and the U.S. understand the importance of Asian Pacific security, as the Japan-U.S. Alliance has been the cornerstone of ensuring peace and prosperity in the region.

However, Canada has started to take more interest in the Asia-Pacific region only recently, and mostly from an economic viewpoint. I truly feel that Canada should have a balanced view of the Asia-Pacific region that includes not only economics, but also politics and security.

In order to develop good economic relations, a sound security environment is essential. Even though East Asia is the fastest growing region, many security uncertainties and concerns still remain. The accelerated development of missiles and nuclear capability by North Korea poses a new level of threat to Japan and the international community.

Japan and other countries in the region are concerned with the increasing assertiveness of China in the areas of economy, diplomacy and military, such as its unilateral actions in the South and East China Sea. Any disputes or conflicts should be resolved in a rule-based manner.

In this respect, Japan welcomes that the two Canadian frigates are now dispatched to the Asia-Pacific region, where they have participated in joint exercises with U.S. and Japanese vessels.

Japan, the U.S. and Canada should work together to cope with various challenges in the Asia-Pacific region as well as globally.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding, I would like to briefly touch upon the checkered history of Japanese-Canadians. This year, 2017, marks the 140th anniversary of the arrival of the first Japanese immigrant to Canada. Like many Japanese-Americans, Japanese-Canadians have suffered much from painful experiences, including the internment from 1942 and various restrictions that continued even after the end of WWII. Redress for internment was finally achieved in 1988 under the Mulroney Government, in the same year as in the U.S., after long and hard work by Japanese-Canadians. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the internment, and in September, the annual general meeting of the National Association of Japanese-Canadians will be held in Ottawa. It will be an occasion to pay tribute to Japanese-Canadians for their dedication and contribution to the multi-cultural society of Canada over the generations.

Thank you once again for this wonderful opportunity to share my views with you. Allow me to extend my sincere hopes for the success of this important annual meeting today.

Thank you for your attention.