

His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence;

His Excellency Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, UAE Special Envoy to Japan and President-Designate of COP 28;

Excellencies; colleagues of diplomatic corps; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen:

Konbanwa, Assalam Alaykum!

Thank you very much for attending the National Day of Japan commemorating the 63rd birthday of His Majesty the Emperor today in the 5th year of Reiwa Era under the reign of His Majesty. I would also like to mention that earlier this month, on February 11th, Japan also celebrated the National Foundation Day, commemorating the accession of the first Emperor, Emperor Jimmu, on the same day in 660 B.C. by the Gregorian calendar.

【Earthquakes in Turkey and Syria】

At the outset, together with all gathered here, I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the victims and all those affected in Turkey and Syria by the recent devastating earthquakes, and pray for early recovery of the injured and finding of the missing. Japan provided its emergency relief goods stored in Dubai to the affected areas in both countries, dispatched medical teams, and continues to render whatever assistance possible, sharing in our heart the pain of the people there as Japan itself being a disaster-prone country. Japan also commends the UAE's relief assistance provided by the "Chivalrous Knight/2" operation.

【Cultural/Social values Japan embraces】

Today as I celebrate these commemorative days and pause to think about history of Japan and its tradition, I am again reminded of values Japan and its people embrace in our culture and tradition. Many people associate Japan and Japanese culture with such things as natural landscape nuanced by four distinct seasons, traditional performing arts, martial arts, tea ceremony, flower arrangement, Zen Buddhism, or, manga/anime, cosplay, etc. But, what I want to

draw your attention to is, what is rooted in our culture and tradition beyond what we see with our eyes, which is, spiritual aspects behind all these that are associated with Japan: harmony; respect for nature and people; aesthetic sense of beauty centered around simplicity and serenity; purity or cleanliness. They are also well represented: in the Japanese cuisine, for example, when we stress the importance of seasonal ingredients fresh from nature; in the traditional short poem of *Haiku*, for example, in which we try to capture a moment of wonder or enlightened feelings in the simplest way of 17 syllables. And, we value discipline and diligence in our social code and work ethics, striving to create harmony, and solidarity when in need, with others.

【War in Ukraine 】

Ladies and gentlemen, in my remarks one year ago here at the same reception, I stressed the importance of harmony and solidarity among the nations of the world in the face of a foreign invasion of Ukraine, which marks a sad anniversary tomorrow. As I celebrate our national day today, my heart sinks again at the thought of the ongoing suffering of the people of Ukraine. Japan rejects any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force in any region, and continues to work closely with the world community to help put an end to this crisis at the earliest while continuing to extend our helping hands to the people of Ukraine. As Japan holds the presidency of G7 this year, Japan will make its utmost to lead the discussion in the forum on this matter of critical importance to the international peace and security.

【Rule of law and the network of partnerships】

As we are all aware, there is no simple and easy solution to the challenges and problems we are facing in this world now. But, there are things that we can and should do, in order to stop the problems from getting worse and to lead us all in the right direction toward peace, stability and prosperity. And, the first and foremost of which is upholding the free and open international order based on the rule of law. The rule of law among nations is a universal concept. It is not about choosing sides or camps. It is not taking the middle ground between opposing camps. It is about returning to the unshakable principles that all the members of the United Nations subscribe to.

Another thing we should strive for is, working closer with partners with

responsibility and commitment for peace and prosperity, and expanding the network of such partnerships regionally and globally. Japan is ready to work with any such partners, including the United Arab Emirates. Last month Japan organized a Ministerial Open Debate at the UN Security Council on the theme of "Rule of Law among Nations" as President of the Security Council. Japan is eager to work together with the UAE on the Security Council this year as colleague non-permanent members for the maintenance of international peace and security. As the UAE hosts COP 28 this year, Japan will also closely align itself with the efforts of the UAE for the success of COP 28 in the work of Global Stocktake and in leading the discussion for setting a right and pragmatic path of energy transition while securing the stable supply of energy around the world. In this regard, as it was announced last month, Japan welcomes the appointment of Dr. Sultan as President-Designate of COP 28 and is eager to work closely together for "maximum energy, minimum emissions," and for "ensuring that our progress is inclusive, pro-climate and pro-growth," as Dr. Sultan says.

【Japan-UAE relations and our future】

Allow me here to touch upon the ever-developing bilateral relations between Japan and the UAE. We celebrated the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations last year, and we have seen for the past year steady developments in our cooperation such as: exchanges of high-level visits, including the visit of H.H. Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed bin Zayed to Japan, H.E. Dr. Sultan's visit twice and other ministerial visits both ways; starting of high school student regular exchanges between Tokyo Metropolitan City and the UAE; implementation of visa exemption measures for Emirati ordinary passport holders; the signing of the Joint Declaration on the implementation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Initiative, which sets forth the establishment of a Ministerial Committee and several subcommittees to cover a broad range of bilateral cooperation, and meetings of these committees are planned to be convened this year. Cooperative projects for decarbonization involving the use of ammonia and hydrogen, and so on, and so forth.

As the both countries start the next 50 years of cooperation this year, I would like to highlight a very important built-in pillar in all of Japan's cooperation with the UAE, which is cooperation in education and human resource development, especially, empowerment of younger generation of Emiratis. At the

request of President H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Japanese School Abu Dhabi has been accepting Emirati kids starting from kindergarten up to G9 for the past 17 years, after which those Emirati youngsters go to Japan for high school and university studies, and the first batch of these students are now in the sophomore year at Tokai University in Japan. Today, I am pleased to have Chancellor of Tokai University, Mr. Yamada, here with us at this reception, and I would like to commend tremendous efforts of Mr. Yamada and Tokai University for giving a wonderful finishing touch to this epoch-making educational cooperation by accepting Emirati graduates of Japanese School Abu Dhabi. I would like you all to join me in giving him a big round of applause.

Japan will continue with this important pillar of education and HRD cooperation, such as expanding scholarship program to Emirati undergraduate and graduate students, enhancing corporate internship program both in terms of number of trainees and coverage of different industrial sectors. I would also like to expand high school student regular exchange programs beyond Tokyo. And I believe all these cooperation will make a substantial contribution to the continuing prosperity of the UAE and efforts for this purpose, including Emiratization and Sandooq Al Watan initiative H. E. Sheikh Nahyan is leading . Japan will be hosting the next Expo, Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai, the theme of which is "Designing Future Society for Our Lives." Japan is and will always be ready to work with the UAE for empowerment of the youth as we together design our future.

Thank you very much once again for coming and I wish all a pleasant evening. *Shukran jazeelan!*