

**Remarks by Ambassador Akio ISOMATA
at the 2024 National Day Reception (February 15, 2024)**

His Excellency Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh, Minister of State, MOFA;
His Excellency Rashid Abdullah Al Nuaimi, Former Minister of
Foreign Affairs of the UAE; Excellencies; Distinguished guests;
Ladies and gentlemen: *Konbanwa, Assalam Alaykum!*

Thank you very much for attending the National Day of Japan commemorating the 64th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor. I am greatly honored to have you all here to celebrate our National Day, as Japan enters, under the reign of His Majesty, the 6th year of the Era of *Reiwa*, which can be roughly translated as “beautiful harmony.”

【Wars in Ukraine, Gaza, and other parts of the world】

As we celebrate today’s event, my heart also aches at the thought of the devastation, loss of life, injuries, damages, plight of the people suffering even at this moment from the scourge of wars and conflicts around the world. We have been and still are learning the hard way how difficult it is, and how costly it is, to build and maintain peace and stability. However, we cannot and should not stop our efforts for putting an end to these miseries that we, human beings, are causing ourselves, while

extending assistance to those in danger and in need of help.

Japan has been with the people of Ukraine fighting for the past 2 years for a just cause, extending maximum assistance towards the realization of a just and lasting peace. Most recently last month, Japan announced its concrete plan of contribution to the Ukraine's Peace Formula as well as a financial contribution to a NATO trust fund for helping Ukraine upgrade its defense capabilities. Next week in Tokyo, we will organize the **Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Reconstruction**, looking ahead to promote efforts and provide support for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction, through public-private partnership with the involvement of the private sector. Here, let me reiterate once again Japan's principled position of opposing any attempt, anywhere, at unilateral change of the status quo by force.

Japan is also with the people of the Middle East, people suffering from the ongoing war. While unequivocally condemning the terrorist attacks by Hamas and others, and calling for the immediate release of hostages, Japan continues to work to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza, while urging all parties to comply with international law, including international humanitarian law. Japan led the G7 discussion on

this matter as the Presidency last year and has worked vigorously for the adoption of relevant UN Security Council resolutions, being a member of the Council last year and this year. In this regard, Japan highly appreciates UAE's strenuous efforts and robust activities on the Council, also as its member for the past two years, as well as UAE's huge contribution to easing of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Reiterating the importance of the protection of civilians and greatly concerned over the ever-worsening situations, especially in Rafah at this moment, Japan will continue to work together closely with regional and international partners in extending humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza and towards achieving a durable peace based on a "two-state solution."

【Spirit of peace in the Way of Tea】

In the last year's national day reception in this same room, I shared with the participants some thoughts about spiritual aspects of the culture of Japan, including Zen Buddhism and Haiku. Today, allow me, as an extension, to refer to the Japanese *Chado*, the Way of Tea, as I believe it is also of relevance to what I just mentioned. The spirit of *Chado* is often epitomized in four guiding principles: *Wa, Kei, Sei, Jaku*, that is, **Harmony, Respect, Purity and Tranquility**. The reason why it is called the "Way" is because it is not just a ceremony of drinking

tea, but because it is also a philosophy and an art of life, which encompasses the wholeness of benevolent human nature and brings calmness in your mind through its practice. According to the Urasenke School, one of the major schools of *Chado*, the principles underlying *Chado* are **【quote】** "universal" and "in a world such as ours today, fraught with unrest, friction, self-centeredness, and other such social ailments, can guide us toward the realization of genuine peace **【unquote】**". I cannot agree with this more, and I also see a lot in common in the spirit and principles of *Chado* and the intrinsic value of Islamic culture stressing tolerance, which the UAE fervently promotes. Mutual respect breeds tolerance, bringing differences into harmony and creating a state of peace and tranquility. Let me add that *Master Sen Rikyu*, who perfected the Way of Tea in the 16th century in Japan, lived in an age of constant wars among feudal lords leading up to the unification of Japan under the *Tokugawa Shogunate*.

Last month, January 2024, "***Chado Urasenke Tankokai Abu Dhabi Association***" was formally established in the UAE as an officially recognized overseas branch of Urasenke *Chado* School headquartered in Kyoto, after more than 13 years' activities as "*Urasenke Abu Dhabi Study Group*", having also, as

members, enthusiastic Emiratis. The venue of their activities has been the well-equipped Japanese teahouse, which was donated in 2009 by *Sen Genshitsu*, the then Grand Master of Urasenke, to the then Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and current President of the UAE, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed. The teahouse is located in the Emirates Palace Hotel, and the members get together every Thursday and Sunday there, where you can observe their regular practice on those days. Let me add that the group was conferred the Japanese Foreign Minister's Award last year for its contribution over the years to the promotion of cultural exchanges between Japan and the UAE and other countries.

【Japan-UAE relations and our future】

Lastly, allow me to briefly touch upon the ever-developing bilateral relations between Japan and the UAE. Last year 2023 was blessed with the visit twice by Prime Minister KISHIDA to the UAE in the context of bilateral visit and participation in the UNFCCC Conference, COP28, generating further momentum to drive forward our bilateral cooperation. In the bilateral visit, the two leaders agreed, for instance, on the "Global Green Energy Hub" concept, aiming to make the Middle East a global hub for clean energy and decarbonization as well as the "Global Green Journey" concept, covering green materials

sector. There are already a number of clean energy projects being prepared or implemented by companies of Japan and the UAE, including in the areas of renewable energy, hydrogen and ammonia. Japan joins other countries in congratulating and commending the UAE's successful presidency for COP28, and looking forward to increased opportunities for decarbonization-related projects to be generated by the success of the COP28. During the visit of our Prime Minister, the two leaders also concurred in the scheme of "Cooperation on the Semiconductor and Battery Industries and Technologies." Japan expects further investment from the UAE under this cooperation scheme and in other areas.

Last year the two countries saw the setting in motion of the implementation mechanism of the Comprehensive and Strategic Partnership Initiative, for which the ministerial document was signed during the visit of His Highness Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed bin Zayed earlier. Five (5) sub-committees covering a wide range of bilateral cooperation and a Ministerial supervisory committee are established under the mechanism, and the inaugural meetings of all of these committees were convened last year to be followed by respective annual meetings every year. Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology

entered into force last month, paving a way for concrete projects in this regard for defense cooperation between the two countries. As we mark the 50th anniversary of opening of the Japanese embassy in Abu Dhabi this year, and as we host the Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai next year, succeeding Expo 2020 Dubai, under the theme of "Designing Future Society for Our Lives," Japan is and will always be ready to work together with the UAE and other friendly partners around the world as we together design our future.

Thank you very much once again for attending tonight's event and I wish you all a pleasant evening. *Arigato Gozaimashita, Shukran jazeelan!*