

SEIJI MAEHARA

The Honorable Seiji Maehara was serving as Japan's minister for foreign affairs at the time of the New Shimoda Conference and is a member of the House of Representatives. The following is the text of his special address to the conference participants.

I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations on the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE). Since its foundation, the JCIE, most capably headed by President Tadashi Yamamoto, has played an enormous role in enhancing mutual understanding and exchange between Japan and other countries. Once again, allow me to pay my respects to the JCIE and President Yamamoto.

The Japanese-American Assembly, the so-called Shimoda Conference, was first convened in 1967. It has served since as a distinctive forum in which top Japanese and American leaders from different sectors come together to exchange views frankly on the latest developments in international affairs and Japan-US relations. There were various factors at that time which led to the establishment of such a forum for dialogue mainly among nongovernmental players—what we now call Track 1.5 dialogue. Having achieved significant economic growth, Japan had started to seek a role as an independent player in the international arena. Another factor could be that intellectual attention toward Japan grew to new heights in the United States. And we can also say that it was the time when research and discussions on international politics were becoming active within Japan. As the Shimoda Conference was convened at the time when the networks among experts and institutions on international political and security affairs had yet to be fully developed, the conference had a significant impact both on Japan-US bilateral relations and on the exchange activities between parliamentarians and academics. The Shimoda Conference was convened nine times until 1994, and played an important role in strengthening the multilayered relationship between Japan and the United States by helping to set the direction for bilateral relations and deepening the personal bonds between the future leaders of the two countries.

I am sure that a candid and enthusiastic debate has also taken place amongst the distinguished participants during today's New Shimoda Conference, looking ahead to future challenges. I have had the pleasure of participating in the Japan-US

Parliamentary Exchange Program, a program which was initiated as the result of the Shimoda Conference. Parliamentary exchange gives legislators of both countries unique opportunities to know each other and build relationships of trust, which are crucial for a strong alliance. I would have joined the discussion with you if my schedule had allowed. As I could not make it, however, I would like to take this opportunity to present my views on the main subject of today's conference: the role of Japan and the United States in the international community.

THE ASIA-PACIFIC IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND THE ROLE OF JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

If we compare the current situation with that of the time of the original Shimoda Conference, the environments surrounding both Japan and the United States have changed dramatically. In contrast with the Cold War era, when a bipolar system involving the United States and the Soviet Union held sway, multipolarization and globalization are the defining features of the 21st century international community in which we now live. There is also the rapid rise of a number of emerging countries, who are increasing their presence not only in the economic but also in the political arena. Moreover, the cross-border movement of people, goods, and money has intensified dramatically and, thanks to advances in IT, information spreads around the world and impacts global public opinion in the blink of an eye.

Last month, the actions of a young man who committed suicide by setting himself on fire in Tunisia triggered an eruption of the people's frustration against the government regime. This movement spread across the country through new means of communication and through social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, eventually leading to massive protests and the collapse of the regime. In Egypt, President Mubarak was likewise forced to resign. Such political and social disturbances in the Middle East have immediate economic repercussions throughout the globe and can result in uncertainties in areas such as world energy prices. In this regard, the current rise in food costs brings to mind the forecast of a tight food supply in the medium to long term as a result of the global increase in population. This is an immediate problem for Japan, which depends heavily on food and energy imports. Therefore, we must be aware of risks associated with uncertainties in the world and stand ready to address the issue of food and energy security from various perspectives.

Because globalization has such positive and negative aspects, Japan and the United States are expected to strengthen cooperation on global issues. The New Shimoda Conference can be a good forum to discuss the challenges of globalization.

Turning our eyes to the Asia Pacific region, uncertainties still persist even two decades after the end of the Cold War. Looking back at the past year, in addition

to the repeated provocative behavior by North Korea, such as the sinking of a South Korean Navy patrol vessel, the shelling of the Yeonpyeong Island and that country's ongoing uranium enrichment program, many issues relating to territories and seas also came up. All these are still fresh in our minds.

The Asia Pacific is a region full of ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. The region that has benefited the most from economic globalization as a catalyst for achieving growth is Asia. The GDP of the Asian region accounted for 13 percent of the global total in 1967, when the Shimoda Conference was first held. But that figure had doubled to 25 percent by 2009. Some even estimate that it will reach 40 percent by 2030. The rapid growth of the emerging countries in Asia, such as China and India, is providing opportunities for big markets and growth, not just for the Asia Pacific region but for the entire world.

Building upon the dynamism created by this diversity, we must realize a system of open cooperation with the participation of the rising emerging countries while avoiding conflicts stemming from differing interests and values. We should build this new order based on the fundamental philosophy that the development of the Asia Pacific region through cooperation rather than in circumstances where hegemony reigns is inseparable from the long-term interests of the countries in the region. In this connection, it is important to develop "institutional foundations" such as the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights, free and fair trade and investment rules, and the protection of intellectual property rights, in addition to the development of infrastructure, in order to realize the potential strengths of the countries concerned to the fullest.

In visualizing such a new order, the Japan-US Alliance, which has consistently functioned as an indispensable public asset for the stability and prosperity of the Asia Pacific region throughout the post-World War II era, remains absolutely vital. There are increasing expectations concerning the roles of Japan and the United States in the maintenance of peace and stability in the region, and I believe that we shoulder grave responsibilities.

Japan will continue to make efforts to promote regional cooperation in the Asia Pacific in collaboration with the United States, which has been deepening its engagement further in the region under the Obama administration. Having been established in 1967, the same year that the Shimoda Conference was first launched, ASEAN has now expanded its membership to 10 and has been playing a central role in regional cooperation. We especially welcome the decision on US participation in the East Asia Summit (EAS), amongst the various frameworks evolving with ASEAN at the core. On the economic front, APEC is playing an important role in building a foundation for liberalization of trade and investment. As was agreed at APEC Yokohama last year, we will continue to work toward the realization of a Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP), building upon the regional endeavors currently under way. In particular, a Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership (TPP) agreement is an important pathway to an FTAAP.

If this framework becomes a reality with the participation of both Japan and the United States, not only will it have a significant economic and political impact but it can also be regarded as a huge step forward in the process of strengthening Japan-US relations. We will carry out consultations with the United States and other relevant countries, and the government will reach a decision on whether to join by around June of this year.

THE DEEPENING OF THE JAPAN-US ALLIANCE

It cannot be stressed too much that firm bilateral ties between Japan and the United States form the very foundation upon which the two countries can work together to secure the stability and prosperity of the Asia Pacific region. We will further deepen and develop the Japan-US Alliance focusing on the three pillars of security, economy, and cultural and people-to-people exchange. We will speed up consultations between the two governments in order to present a vision of the Alliance that is suitable for the 21st century on the occasion of Prime Minister Kan's visit to the United States, which is expected to take place in the first half of this year.

The Japan-US security arrangements, which lie at the core of our Alliance, play an indispensable role, not only for Japan's defense but also for the peace and stability of the region. What we need to do urgently is to advance work on the updating and revalidation of the Common Strategic Objectives between Japan and the United States while building Japan's own defense capability, based on the assessment of the current security environment in East Asia.

The second pillar of the deepening of the Japan-US Alliance is the economy. We recognize that the sound evolution of our Alliance is predicated on the two countries having robust economies. We shall therefore advance consultations on free trade and investment, such as the TPP, which I mentioned earlier. As a new frontier of Japan-US economic cooperation, we shall also boost collaboration in new areas of growth and leading-edge technologies, such as clean energy, high-speed railway systems, and the superconducting Maglev, which should lead to renewed growth, jobs, and exports. We are especially convinced that, if Japan's top-quality high-speed railway system is introduced in the United States, it will be a highly significant project symbolizing Japan-US cooperation.

The third pillar comprises cultural and people-to-people exchange. This is an area that requires serious endeavors, as it is essential to foster mutual understanding between the peoples of our two countries on a wide range of levels in order to deepen and develop the Japan-US Alliance on a mid- to long-term basis. In this regard, I strongly feel that there is a pressing need for us to revitalize the intellectual and parliamentarians' exchanges between Japan and the United States, which the Shimoda Conference pioneered. I say this because continuous

dialogue and a multilayered network of people involving not only leaders from government but also from academia, business, and politics is the very key to mutual understanding between the two societies. Even though the number of Japanese students studying in US universities has declined in recent years, we are carrying out measures such as the dispatch of young Japanese teachers to the United States and the organization of student exchanges. This is based on the belief that the promotion of youth exchange is indeed an investment for the future development of Japan-US relations on a mid- to long-term basis.

In the field of exchange between parliamentarians, the Japan-US Parliamentary Exchange Program I mentioned earlier has built up a very impressive track record as a forum for promoting dialogue and exchange between our two countries. As politicians are expected to play an even greater role in the international arena, I am convinced of the importance of further revitalizing Japan-US parliamentary exchange.

The year 2012 marks the centenary of the donation of 3,000 cherry trees to Washington DC by Mayor Ozaki of Tokyo. I hope that the friendly relations between the peoples of both countries will be further enhanced through the various exchange events lined up to commemorate the anniversary.

CONCLUSION

Dynamic changes have taken place in the domestic and international environments surrounding Japan and the United States since the time of the Shimoda Conference. The basic picture, however, remains unchanged in that the two countries are continuing to tackle their challenges hand-in-hand. It is truly significant to see that, with the holding of the New Shimoda Conference today, we now have a reinvigorated bond of Japan-US policy dialogue and intellectual exchange. I very much hope that this will lead to the strengthening of dialogue and exchange in the future.

In the five months since taking office as Foreign Minister last September, I have held four meetings with Secretary of State Clinton, and the relationship of mutual trust has deepened. I have learned from President Yamamoto that the support from various people on the US side has been extremely helpful in arranging the Shimoda Conferences and Japan-US Parliamentary Exchange. I believe it is important that we work together to further support the New Shimoda Conference to further deepen and develop Japan-US relations, which have been so nurtured by our predecessors thus far. Let me conclude by expressing my determination to dedicate all my strength to fulfill my responsibilities as foreign minister.