

Summary of Remarks by Consul General Suguru Minoya

Kia ora.

Thank you very much for joining us. I was delighted to welcome everyone as we celebrated my appointment as Consul General of Japan in Auckland.

It is a great honour to begin my duties in a country that has held a special place in my heart for many years. This is my second posting in New Zealand, having previously served at the Embassy of Japan in Wellington from 2007 to 2010. Returning to New Zealand feels like coming back to "Old Friends."

Since arriving a few weeks ago, I have met many people from government, the business community and the Japanese community. Everywhere I have been, I have received an incredibly warm welcome, for which I am truly grateful. I look forward to meeting many more people and communities in the months ahead.

The world today faces profound change, making international cooperation more important than ever. Throughout the post-war era, Japan has consistently contributed to international peace and prosperity by upholding the rule of law, respecting international law, and supporting a free and open international order. That commitment remains unchanged.

Japan will continue to advance its vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, guided by the enduring principles of freedom, the rule of law, openness, inclusiveness and respect for diversity. Together with our partners, we will continue contributing to peace, stability and prosperity across the region and beyond. New Zealand is an indispensable partner in these efforts.

Next year marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and New Zealand. Over the past 75 years, our friendship has grown through government cooperation, business, education, science, culture, tourism, sports, sister-city relationships and, above all, the countless personal connections between our peoples. Our Strategic Cooperative Partnership has become more important than ever. Since my previous posting here, our partnership has evolved significantly, including through the CPTPP and closer security cooperation.

Economically, Japan and New Zealand have built a strong and mutually beneficial relationship over many decades. Building on this strong foundation, I

believe there is considerable scope to deepen cooperation in many areas. The Consulate-General will continue supporting both our long-standing business ties and new opportunities for collaboration.

Within our jurisdiction, there are 20 sister-city relationships between Japan and New Zealand. This year, Auckland and Fukuoka celebrate the 40th anniversary of their partnership, and I understand a delegation from Fukuoka will visit Auckland in July. I hope the visit will further strengthen their friendship.

I also thanked Auckland Council and all the New Zealand local authorities that have nurtured sister-city relationships with Japan over many years. Their commitment has made an invaluable contribution to the friendship between our two countries.

Sport is another powerful bridge between our peoples. I congratulated Auckland FC on winning the league championship this season under the leadership of its Japanese captain, Hiroki Sakai, and expressed my hope that this success will inspire even greater sporting exchanges between Japan and New Zealand.

These people-to-people ties remain the true foundation of our relationship. As Consul General, I look forward to working with all of you to make next year's 75th anniversary not only a celebration of our shared history, but also the beginning of an even brighter future together.

Guests were also invited to enjoy dishes prepared by the Consulate-General's chef, Chef Kitazono.

Finally, I thanked everyone once again for their friendship and support and expressed my commitment to further strengthening the partnership between Japan and New Zealand together with all of you.