

2023 Emperor's Birthday Reception: Remarks by Ambassador Yamawaki (9 March 2023)

Your Excellency Mr. Giorgos Papanastasiou, Minister of Energy, Commerce and Industry,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to extend a warm welcome to you, our friends of Japan. I would like to thank everyone who is present here to celebrate our Emperor's 63<sup>rd</sup> Birthday. We are more than pleased to be able to hold our National Day reception this year after the three-year interval due to the pandemic.

First of all, let me express my heartfelt condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the earthquake in Turkey and Syria as well as to the victims of the tragic train accident in Greece.

I would also like to extend my sincere condolences to the victims of the war in Ukraine. With a strong determination to reject any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force in any region, Japan will continue to work closely with the international community, including the G7 as a chair, while providing assistance for Ukraine vigorously.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Republic of Cyprus and Japan have continuously enjoyed friendly relations since the independence of Cyprus. I would like to stress that since Japan opened its Embassy here in Nicosia in 2018 and Cyprus established its own in Tokyo in 2019, our cooperation developed greatly.

Especially last year, which marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations, consisted one of the important milestones.

In this anniversary year, Cypriot dignitaries including Ms. Annita Demetriou, the President of Parliament, visited Japan. The political dialogue between the two Foreign Ministries took place in Tokyo.

I would also like to mention the opening of Sakura Park - Cherry Blossom Park in the village of Kambos last year, which our Embassy created in cooperation with the village, Ministry of Agriculture and donors. I hope to continue this project as a symbol of friendship and goodwill between our two countries, and I look forward to the cherry blossoms blooming in the coming month.

It is true that there is still room for further development in various areas including the field of science, technology and innovation, in which I have been involved for many years. I believe this is one of the fields where I could contribute to enhancing our bilateral ties in the near future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the future of this beautiful Island, the resolution of the Cyprus problem is the indispensable issue not only for Cypriots but also for the region and rest of the world. Japan will continue to support all efforts to restart negotiations and solve the question under the principles of the Bi-zonal, Bi-communal Federation in accordance with UN resolutions.

We will maintain close cooperation with the new government of Republic of Cyprus under the leadership of President Nikos Christodoulides to address these issues.

In closing my speech, I would like to wish good health and every success for you all and the further development of the relations between Cyprus and Japan.

I hope you will enjoy Japanese cuisine with Japanese Sake, which has been awarded UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Also enjoy the Ikebana, Japanese flower arrangement decorated by our friends in Cyprus, Philanthes and Ikebana Club for today's reception.

I thank you very much for your attention.