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Good Afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to this gathering. I'd like to thank Managing Director [Yoshinori] Nakai for welcoming me here today and Chairman [Yoichi] Nishimura of the planning committee for serving as the moderator. And thank you all for coming.

All my senior colleagues from the U.S. Government head over to the Press Club at some point during their visit, and are grateful for the warm welcome, the frank discussion of issues, and the opportunity you provide for us to communicate with the people of Japan.

Democracies can't function without a strong relationship between a free and independent press, and a transparent and accountable government. I'm continually impressed by the serious coverage, and the wide variety of media outlets that exist here in Japan. And one of the good things is that, unlike at home, I can't understand most of what you say.

Preparing for the opportunity to speak with you has given me the chance to reflect on my two years in Japan and on the year ahead -- and I'd like to share some thoughts with you today.

First and foremost, the U.S.-Japan alliance is as strong as it has ever been. Just last weekend, the Yomiuri/Gallup poll showed that U.S.-Japan relations were in better shape than at any time since the poll was first taken 15 years ago.



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Thanks to the efforts of generations of Japanese and Americans in government, business, science, architecture, anime, martial arts -- our two countries have created a partnership that not only enriches the lives of our citizens, but plays a critical role in addressing global challenges.

Our bilateral partnership is now at the center of powerful multilateral coalitions. Smaller more vulnerable countries need our help to succeed, and sometimes to survive. Problems like climate change, terrorism, poverty, disease, and nuclear non-proliferation cannot be addressed by any one country acting alone. They are global concerns that need international action. The U.S. and Japan are called upon not just to engage, but to lead. As two of the most powerful democracies in the world, we must never forget that our shared values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law are our greatest strength.

There are countless examples to prove this point, but let me mention some from just the past few weeks: Five days ago, JAXA and NASA astronauts landed safely after six months together on the International Space Station. Last month, the U.S. government began exploring the possibility of bringing Maglev to Maryland. And just last weekend, our countries were leaders at the historic COP21 talks where we committed to double our R&D budget[s] for renewable energy over the next five years. Each of these initiatives is built on our shared commitment to innovation and building a better, safer world. That's why other countries look to the United States and Japan for advice, investment, and security.

Two years ago when President Obama appointed me to this position, he said he wanted to send a strong message that the Rebalance to Asia was a core element of the U.S. foreign policy, and that it is built upon the unshakeable foundation of the U.S.-Japan alliance. On his State visit here in 2014, the President reiterated that the United States is a Pacific nation, that we are committed to the defense of Japan. He emphasized that this is a transformational moment for the alliance and we need to make the most of this once-in-a-generation opportunity.

The President knows Prime Minister Abe to be a dynamic leader with a forward-looking vision for his country. He's impressed with the Prime Minister's economic revitalization program and commitment to the empowerment of women. President Obama also stressed that improved relations between Japan and its neighbors is in the national interest of the United States and asked me to help move this process forward.

As the first working mother to serve as U.S. Ambassador here, the President asked me to reach out to Japanese women and families to share the U.S. experience. And he asked my children to encourage their generation to invest in the future of this critically important alliance. The President hoped that sending the daughter of a Pacific War veteran to serve as Ambassador during this 70th anniversary year would remind people in both countries of the power of reconciliation and the possibilities for peace.



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I've been profoundly moved by the special place that President Kennedy's memory holds in the hearts of the Japanese people. I'm inspired that his call to service resonates so deeply here. The warm welcome that my family has received has deepened our commitment to live up to this legacy and do our utmost to bring our two great nations even closer.

Over the past two years, thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I've welcomed former American POWs to the Embassy. They're about the same age as my father would be, and they bring the same message of reconciliation. Whether they were captured in China, survived Bataan and Corregidor, or were shot down over Tokyo -- despite their suffering, they also tell of kindnesses received from Japanese soldiers who shared food with them and took great risks to help them survive.

For me, personally, the most powerful moment of last year was in March when I met the family of the captain of the Japanese destroyer that sank my father's PT boat. Like my father, Captain [Kohei] Hanami went home after the war to enter public service -- serving as the mayor of his town in Fukushima.

Seeing the photo from the 1950s that my father inscribed, "To Captain Hanami -- late enemy, present friend" was a powerful reminder that even during times of conflict, we have more in common than divides us.

And only a few weeks later in April, on a grand and public scale, I watched Prime Minister Abe deliver an historic address to a Joint Session of Congress -- after laying a wreath at Arlington Cemetery's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the World War II Memorial. That eloquent speech made a powerful impression on the American people. In it, the Prime Minister called our relationship "an alliance of hope." And I have been struck in the recent months by the ways in which that's true.

In the area of security, the passage of the Peace and Security [Preserved] Legislation and the revised Defense Guidelines have provided a strong foundation for our future cooperation in an increasingly tense regional environment. America has forward-deployed its most advanced radar, ships, and aircraft. Our dedicated service men and women are stationed here to put their lives on the line for the defense of Japan. And yesterday our two nations advanced an agreement in principle on a new Host Nation Support package. This five-year agreement represents another significant achievement for the alliance. The United States appreciates the support and cooperation which will underscore the Rebalance to Asia and demonstrate the enduring strength of our alliance.

At joint-use bases in Misawa and Sasebo, and joint exercises like Yamasakura, I have seen the mutual respect our forces have for each other. Their strong real-world relationship is nowhere more in evidence than during the humanitarian missions we've conducted in the Philippines and Nepal. This cooperation has its roots in Operation Tomodachi, conducted in Tohoku after the tragedies of 3/11. And now, the United States and Japanese forces are working to save lives and bring hope to other countries suffering from natural disasters.



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In addition to bilateral security challenges, our governments must confront 21st century issues of terrorism and cybersecurity, and we must prevent the militarization of space. We're expanding our security cooperation to include regional partners like Australia and India who share the same democratic values. Strong ties between Japan and Korea are also critical to these efforts.

Yet even as we increase our security cooperation and expand its scope, we're mindful of its impact on local communities -- particularly in Okinawa. That's why we have worked with the Government of Japan to develop and implement the Okinawa Consolidation plan which, when complete, will result in the strategic realignment of our forces across the Pacific region, the return of 68% of the land south of Kadena, and 4,000 additional hectares of environmentally pristine land, almost 20% of the total U.S. holdings. The West Futenma Housing Project, returned last March, is being developed into a state-of-the-art medical facility. And just about 10 days ago, we announced the early return of three parcels of land in Naha that will accelerate that process and reduce traffic congestion.

We are going to keep working at this because we are grateful to the people of Japan for welcoming generations of U.S. service members, and we strive to be good neighbors in return.

In the area of economics, our countries are closer than ever. The United States is the Number One foreign direct investor in Japan, and Japan is the second-largest investor in the United States. Companies like Boeing, Sandisk, and 3M perform state-of-the-art manufacturing here, and Apple is building a major research center in Yokohama. Together, we are expanding the frontiers of knowledge in brain science, regenerative medicine, and robotics. Disney Princesses and baseball are big business in both countries.

Our strong bilateral relationship is now going global as our two countries led the region to conclude the largest, most far-reaching, high-standard trade agreement ever negotiated: TPP. This agreement will create good jobs and export opportunities for our farmers, manufacturers, and small businesses. It will lift millions out of poverty and into the middle class on both sides of the Pacific. It will promote our core values by banning child workers, raising labor standards, and requiring state-owned enterprises to compete fairly.

TPP will stimulate invention and creativity in all 12 countries by protecting intellectual property. And it has strong, enforceable provisions to prevent wildlife trafficking, illegal fishing, and preserve biodiversity. As other nations join TPP and these provisions also become part of upcoming agreements with Europe, our shared values will define the economic architecture of this region and the world for years to come. And to anyone who wants to ask the follow-up question, I can answer that right now: Yes, Congress will pass TPP.



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Looking ahead, perhaps the most important issue for our countries to tackle together is climate change. As President Obama said of the historic agreement reached in Paris, "We met the moment." But he acknowledged that our work is just beginning. The U.S. and Japan must be leaders in the movement toward a low-carbon future and help developing countries do the same. Clean and renewable energy will provide millions of jobs in a market with an estimated nine billion users by 2020 [2030?]. American and Japanese companies are already developing the cars, batteries, and power-grids of the future.

As Secretary Kerry said, "How we implement this agreement, how we set our targets and build it out, "will determine whether we are able to address one of the most complex challenges humankind has ever faced." We have the solutions and the capital to implement and scale game-changing solutions right now. It makes business sense; it makes environmental sense; and it's the right thing to do.

In order to tackle this issue, and so many others, we need to enlist the next generation. They need to understand why their parents and grandparents invested so much in the U.S.-Japan alliance, and see it as something amazing they want to be part of. The best way to recruit them is to provide opportunities for them to get to know each other, to discover and explore life in each others' countries.

At the U.S. Embassy, we are making an all-out effort to meet the goal set by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of doubling student exchange numbers by 2020. We conduct outreach programs at high schools and universities. We have a college advising system across Japan. We are energizing Japanese alumni of U.S. schools as the best advocates for study abroad. And we're trying to reach out to younger students in new and different ways and involve them in issues they care about.

For example, I'm now working with high school students in Tokyo, Okinawa, Korea, and the South Bronx in a teleconference exchange where students share their fears, hopes, and dreams for the future. We also connected an elementary school in Kyoga Misaki with one in Manchester, Massachusetts. They're collaborating through technology on the study of an unusual natural resource that they have in common -- a beach with Singing Sands. We hope both these efforts, along with more traditional ones, will inspire young Japanese and Americans to explore the wider world as they get older.

The Japanese government has made significant resources available for study abroad, but we need the business community and academic institutions to keep pushing forward on this agenda.⁵

I know the world today can seem like a daunting place, and there are people in both our countries that would rather turn inward and stay focused at home. But we need to show our children that that's not who we are. As Japan assumes a seat on the [United Nations] Security Council for the 11th time and prepares to host the G-7, 2016 promises to be a -- a year when our two nations can work even more closely on our shared priorities.



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We are the largest contributors to the United Nations and the largest donors to the Green Climate Fund. Our healthcare experts coordinate closely in West Africa to battle Ebola. Last March, our First Ladies announced a partnership between the Peace Corps and JPOV [Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers] to educate girls in Southeast Asia. Our diplomats worked closely in recent months to implement the Iran nuclear agreement. Together, we're combating terrorism and helping millions of desperate refugees build a better life.

We are the people who step up.

We shoulder the burdens of leadership because we have benefitted from the dialogue, partnership, and rules-based order that emerged from World War II.

Prime Minister Abe calls it a "proactive contribution to peace."

President Obama laid out his vision at the United Nations when he said,

To believe in the dignity of every individual, to believe we can bridge our differences, and choose cooperation over conflict -- that [is] not weakness, that is strength. It [is] a practical necessity in this interconnected world.

Americans and Japanese can take great pride in the U.S.-Japan alliance. It's been built through countless acts of reconciliation and friendship. It's sustained by respect and hard work. It brings knowledge and opportunity.

Our countries have distinct national cultures, myths, and traditions. These differences make the closeness of our partnership even more remarkable in today's fragmented world. Together, our nations demonstrate the power of history to bring hope, the power of knowledge to bring progress, and the power of freedom to bring peace.

As citizens of the U.S. and Japan, we've been given great gifts. I hope to be worthy of them as we build the alliance of the future.

Thank you.

¹ Inexact quotation if the reference is to Secretary Kerry's *COP21 Plenary Session remarks* which ran "...how we implement our targets, how we build this agreement, how we build it out for each of our nations and how we strengthen it in the time ahead -- that is what will determine whether we're actually able to address one of the most complex challenges humankind has ever faced." A Google search did not locate any alternative content attributable to Secretary Kerry which as closely resemble the remarks cited by Ambassador Kennedy. However, both sets of remarks are substantially similar in meaning.