

Speech by His Excellency Takehiro Kano
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Delegate of Japan to UNESCO
Japanese evening - 11 October 2024

Excellencies, Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening to you all.

It's a great pleasure and honor for me to welcome you to the reception “Japan Evening” during the 220th session of the Executive Board. I know that all of us will have hectic days ahead, but I hope that we can relax and enjoy this evening.

First of all, I would like to touch upon the recent Conference celebrating a centenary of intellectual cooperation, successfully held last month under the strong leadership of the President of the General Conference. The legacy shown to us from the UNESCO Archives enables us to vividly have an unending dialogue between the present and the past.

A century after the foundation of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation and nearly 80 years after the establishment of UNESCO, the world is still struggling with devastation and sufferings caused by war and conflicts. The peace mission that UNESCO inherited from IIIC remains unfulfilled.

But at the same time, we have good reasons to hope that the peace mission is not totally out of reach forever. I am pleased and honoured to share the announcement made today that Nihon Hidankyo, a Japanese grass root organization made up of atomic bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize this year for their decades long efforts toward a world free of nuclear weapons. Their tireless grass roots raising

awareness activities have been exactly to "construct the defences of peace in the minds of women and men".

So, we have many things to do ahead. During the current session of the Executive Board, we have a plenty of agenda items in front of us that we need to discuss. But I believe that we are on the same page, in the sense that we need UNESCO to be more effective and more efficient in fulfilling the mission we entrusted to it. Japan wishes to support UNESCO in a holistic manner, ranging all areas of its mandate. To that end, I look forward to discussing with all of you during this session.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the milestone events this year for Japan was the 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee held in Delhi last July, where Japan participated as a Committee member and also witnessed the inscription of Sado Island Gold Mines as Japan's 26th World Heritage site. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved for making this happen. We hope that many people will visit and experience Japan's scenic cultural and natural heritage sites, the videos of which are shown this evening.

Japan remains committed to cooperating in the conservation of World Heritage sites worldwide, with a particular focus on supporting capacity building for nomination and conservation in Africa and SIDS, through both financial and technical assistance. We have already supported various programs through UNESCO. One of the most recent examples is to support an initiative to hold an international conference in Nairobi in May next year which aims at modernizing the concept and practice of Heritage Authenticity.

We will have another milestone event ahead this year, namely, the forthcoming session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to be held in Asunción, Paraguay in December. Our nomination of "Traditional Knowledge and Skills of Sake-Making with Koji Mold in Japan" will be examined there for inscription on the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The nomination

covers a rich array of traditional Japanese brewing and distilling techniques, including sake, shochu, and awamori. The inscription would significantly elevate the global profile and recognition of our traditional alcohol beverages, matching them with Washoku, a Japanese culinary tradition that was inscribed in 2013.

Japan has been at the forefront of promoting Education for Sustainable Development. During the session of the Board, we will hold a side event entitled "Good Practices in Education for Sustainable Development in SIDS", in partnership with Cabo Verde and Saint Kitts and Nevis, which will present their exemplary practices in ESD. We hope this initiative will further advance the cause of sustainable education.

We recognize that the promotion of higher education is equally vital as that of basic education. Japan is committed to spearheading the implementation of the UNESCO Global Convention on Higher Education, with the aim of creating an enabling environment where aspiring young individuals worldwide can realize their dreams through quality education.

In the realm of science, Japan has submitted a draft decision during this session of the Board, calling on UNESCO to enhance its efforts in disaster risk reduction, particularly through the promotion of inter-sectoral collaboration. We express our hope that UNESCO and its Member States will join forces to draw upon past experiences and strengthen resilience for the future.

In the field of ocean science, Japan, with a Japanese national serving as the President of IOC, actively supports a variety of programs, including the promotion of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

We will continue to advance ethical discussions and capacity building related to emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and neuroscience, through our voluntary contribution and the deployment of experts in these critical areas.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now, allow me to promote our country, as this is Japan Evening.

In 182 days from now, EXPO 2025 known as “Osaka-Kansai Expo” will start from 13 April next year, and the exhibition will continue up to 13 October. As illustrated in today’s video presentation, the event will be an extraordinary opportunity for encountering with a multitude of cultures from across the globe, under the themes of "Saving Lives", "Empowering Lives" and "Connecting Lives". We anticipate welcoming many participants and experiencing significant people-to-people exchanges during this exhibition.

Relating to “Empowering Lives”, food is a key element. At today’s reception, we are pleased to offer a selection of culinary delights, not just sushi and tempura, but also Osaka’s renowned fast food B-grade gourmet, namely takoyaki (octopus dumplings) and yakisoba (fried noodles), with which ordinary Japanese are familiar at festivals. By savoring this B-grade gourmet, I hope that you will enjoy a virtual travel to Osaka and consider making a real travel to Japan next year.

This evening, we have a couple of partners supporting this reception, which I would like to acknowledge with great appreciation.

First, I would like to express our thanks to Haruna Inc. for their generous contributions, offering unique beverages, innovative pastries, and delightful savory creations that artfully combine traditional Japanese tea with French technology and culture. Thank you very much.

I would also like to mention the support from the Kura Master Association, which has been organizing an annual competition for sake and other types of Japanese alcoholic beverages in Paris since 2017. The competition this year is shown in the video presentation, and you can see that all jury members are French sommeliers, hoteliers and restaurateurs who examine Japanese beverages that match well with French cuisine. Last week, they successfully held the awarding ceremony for the 2024 competition. You can enjoy tasting different types of awarded sake, shochu, awamori and umeshu this evening. Thank you, Kura Master.

Last but not least, you will also enjoy a dance performance by Paris Yosakoi Hinodema. Founded in 2014, this Association is made up of a majority of French nationals and has participated in various events, including the recent Japan Expo held last July. Please note that all the dancers you will see today are French nationals. Yosakoi is a dance form that harmoniously blends tradition and modernity. It originated 70 years ago when the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Kochi Prefecture in Southern Japan organized a festival to uplift the spirits of local people, who were enduring early post-war recession. Since then, this dance has evolved from a local initiative into a global phenomenon, with eight associations now established in France.

Thank you for your attention. Please enjoy the rest of the evening.

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