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Keynote Speech: "Creation of the New Era"

I first would like to present my sincere gratitude to you that I am making a speech at such an honorable opportunity.

This year, Japan-Russia summit has already taken place for three times, and meetings between ministers of both countries are also scheduled. The relationship between Japan and Russia is literally about to experience a new era.

What makes me believe the relationship of the two countries will be promoted is that Russia has passed a new law this month to exempt visa application for short sightseeing trips. Moreover, business visa for three months has already been exempted earlier this year. These will accelerate cultural and economic interaction, which will form a firm relationship between the two countries. I hope a peace treaty will be concluded at some stage of the process.

Now I would like to talk about my personal history with Russia. I have a grandmother who was living in Nagasaki at the time of WWII. Her father was a designer for warships of the Imperial Japanese Navy. When he was in the northeast part of China called Manchukuo, he was kidnapped by the Soviet Union. Soon after that, Nagasaki got the atomic bombing and the war ended. Her family and the Japanese government did their best to find him, but it was unsuccessful. She was too young to remember his face. She tells me that he might have married somebody in the country and created a new family in Russia. This is what I first got to know about the nation.

Years passed, and I went to Sydney for exchange study last year. Most of my friends there were Asian, but I also made friends with a few Russian students. That is my second event about the country.

This year, I participated in a meeting called G20 Youth Forum from my university. The venue, St. Petersburg, was the most western and northern place on earth that I had ever been to. On Sunday, I asked a Japanese who were studying there to take me to a church, though I am a Buddhist. I strongly remember the sacred and magnificent atmosphere in the church.

That is most of what I have experienced about Russia. I believe every one of you has your own experience about each country. I am glad to know some of you even specialize in Japanese and Russian culture and language. I feel this forum is such a precious occasion that we can share our stories and thoughts.

In this forum, we will be discussing three aspects of our lives. Discussions at this forum are the opportunities for people exchange, cultural exchange, and possible business exchange of the two nations.

First, I would like to talk about one of the topics, Energy. Russia has been facing challenges since the economic crisis in the EU that Russia depends on to sell most of their natural gas. In addition, shale gas from the US has been leading decrease of coal prices, which attracts the EU to change from relatively expensive Russian gas.

However, Russia is an important partner of Japan in energy security not only because it is geographically close, but also because it can make different political decisions from other suppliers. Japanese industries and households are experiencing difficulties from high prices of petroleum from the Middle East and liquid natural gas from South-East Asia and Australia. Since the nuclear accident in Fukushima, the demand for thermal power generation has been increasing. Japan could reduce the cost with a gas pipeline from Russia. Russia is an important country for Japan

Next, I would like to discuss another topic, Industrial Cooperation. Russia is one of neighboring countries of Japan like China. Seeing the active industrial interactions between Japan and China, we can easily see the potential between us.

Freight transportation plays an important role in Industry. Today marine transportation is the major means of freight transportation between Japan and the Europe area including Moscow. However, the time and security of the transportation would be improved with the ongoing plan of restoration of the Trans-Siberian Railway. This would invite a number of businesses from Tokyo to Moscow.

Last, I would like to give some of my thoughts on the other topic of the forum, Longevity. Japan's life expectancy is one of the longest in the world whereas that of Russia is one of the shortest among developed nations. We can imagine that the difference in life expectancy comes from the difference in living environment, value on life, and culture of the two countries. Exchanging our way of thinking on life will surely benefit us in living a long and meaningful life.

The summit in April this year had an agreement between the two governments on establishing cultural centers in both countries. Large cities will have cultural centers of each country presently. This will contribute to the cultural interaction, which is necessary for the further relationship.

In the end, I would like to tell you what I like about this forum. This forum is between non-English speaking countries, but English is the official language. That is, we don't originally know English and are now trying to communicate each other in English. Nothing can be taken for granted in our communication, everything is special.

This is how true communication happens. We don't always feel comfortable speaking in English, so we sometimes do our best to make ourselves understood in our mother tongues. For example, some Russian students know Japanese

language and help translate from Japanese to Russian, and some Japanese students know Russian and help translate from Russian to Japanese.

It doesn't matter how much you can speak English. There is always a way to express your thoughts to others, and to understand thoughts of others. This is how I like the forum.

In this forum, each of us is participating as a representative of our countries, and as a future leader of Japan-Russia relationship. We are young. This is why we can accept things and opinions which are different from ours. Our cultural backgrounds are different. This is why we can get to learn from ways of thinking and values that we would not be able to know. I hope this forum is going to be successful and fruitful with our effort. This concludes my speech. Thank you.