

Japan-NATO Anniversary Reception on 4 June
Opening Speech by Ambassador IZAWA Osamu

Deputy Secretary General Radmila SHEKERINSKA,

Distinguished guests,

Thank you for gathering here today. I am delighted to host the Japan-NATO Anniversary Reception as the Mission of Japan to NATO. Our Mission was acknowledged by the North Atlantic Council on May 24, 2018. Although today's date is slightly different, I would like to celebrate May 24th as Japan-NATO Anniversary Day today.

Since its establishment as an independent mission in January of last year, the Mission of Japan to NATO has focused on strengthening Japan-NATO relations, recognizing the interconnectivity of security between in the Indo-Pacific and the Euro-Atlantic. Over the past year, a series of high-level

exchanges have taken place, and the momentum for our cooperation has been growing. In April of last year, Secretary General RUTTE visited Japan and held a summit meeting with then Prime Minister ISHIBA, and in September, Admiral DRAGONE, Chair of the Military Committee, visited Japan and paid a courtesy call on then Defense Minister NAKATANI. Following the inauguration of the TAKAICHI administration, in December, Secretary General RUTTE and Prime Minister TAKAICHI held a telephone meeting, reaffirming their recognition that cooperation between Japan and NATO, and among the NATO-IP4, is strategically important. March kicked-off with your visit to Japan, Ms. SHEKERINSKA. You met with high-level officials, visited the Japan Air Self-Defense Force, Atsugi Air Base, and even visited some of Japan's cutting edge defense industry companies. Today some of them are present at this reception. Your visit is followed by a

historic visit to Japan by the NATO the permanent representatives, marking the first large-scale Indo-Pacific region visit by perm reps in history. These increased exchanges show a commitment on both sides to deepening concrete cooperation in a variety of fields.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine undermines the very foundations of the international order and is a clear violation of international law. If such unilateral changes to the status quo by force are accepted, it will have a serious impact on East Asia. For this reason, Japan is providing unwavering support to Ukraine, and in addition to bilateral support, we place importance on cooperation with NATO. In addition to contributing a total of 100 million euros to the CAP Trust Fund. Quite recently the Japanese government dispatched the Japanese Self-Defense Forces personnel to the NSATU, becoming an operational partner of Nato for the first time in our

security policy history.

Additionally, I am confident that defense industry cooperation will play an extremely important role in our future relation. At the Hague Summit, NATO member states agreed on a 5% target, and at the same time, Japan has also accelerated its 2% target. Both Japan and NATO are significantly increasing their defense budgets to assume their increased security responsibilities. However, strengthening defense capabilities requires more than just funding; developing the defense industry is key and urgent issue. Defense industry cooperation will also be one of the major themes at the upcoming Ankara Summit. Sharing fundamental values with Europe and the United States, and possessing a solid industrial base and advanced technology, Japan can be a reliable partner for NATO countries in defense industry cooperation. Last month, Assistant Secretary General JAAKOLA visited Japan

for the second Japan-NATO Defense Equipment and Industry Dialogue, strengthening the foundation for further cooperation.

Today, I invited 15 leading Japanese defense-related companies from start-ups to heavy industries. Please take this opportunity to listen to their presentations and see what they have on offer.

Finally, introducing Japanese culture, and especially promoting Japanese cuisine, one of the important missions of Japanese diplomatic missions abroad. We have a lovely buffet prepared for you as well as the President of Dassai, who will gladly introduce you to the world of delicious Japanese sake.