

Opening Remarks by Ambassador Hiroyasu Kobayashi at the Awarding Ceremony of the Ambassador's Commendations



Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kia Ora Koutou and thank you for being here today.

The purpose of this occasion is to express my sincere gratitude to the people standing before me, for their contribution to the mutual relationship between Japan and New Zealand.

The Ambassador's Commendation is awarded by Ambassadors of Japan to individuals or groups who have made a distinguished contribution to the deepening of mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and their countries of assignment, in this case, New Zealand.

First of all, it is my great pleasure to award the teachers here with the Ambassador's Commendation, for their efforts in granting the youth of New Zealand knowledge and understanding about Japan and its language and culture. Today, I will be presenting the award to: Dr Penelope Shino of Massey University, Dr Adele Scott of Te Kura, Mr Denis Tate of Feilding High School, Mrs Junko Bracefield of St Matthew's Collegiate School, and Ms Chitose Izuno of Upper Hutt College. It is very important for the future of our relationship that our young people are connected and friendly with each other, and the

educators here are doing a wonderful job of facilitating these initial connections and friendships. Each of the teachers here have influenced the youth of New Zealand and devoted much effort to the advancement of young New Zealanders' knowledge of Japan.

Also, I am honoured to have Mrs Hiromi Morris, the President of Sister Cities New Zealand, present today. She is to be awarded with the Ambassador's Commendation for her efforts towards creating and nurturing the friendly relationships of many cities between Japan and New Zealand; most recently, Palmerston North and Mihara City in Hiroshima Prefecture. This brings the number of Sister City relationships between Japan and New Zealand to 44, the most relationships New Zealand has with any country.

I look forward to the great successes of all of these people, in years ahead.

There is no shortage of exciting events in Japan right now, and in upcoming years. As you know, Japan will host the Rugby World Cup later this year, the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, the Kansai World Masters Games in 2021, and the Osaka World Expo in 2025. These events are all wonderful chances to promote Japan to the rest of the world, and also a chance for people from around the world to build relationships with Japan and the Japanese people. I am confident that the events will spark a renewed interest in Japan for New Zealanders, and I hope that they will have the good fortune of coming into contact with someone like you all, in the future.

Congratulations to each and every one of you, I will now present the awards.