

The Conferral Ceremony for Miss Helen Clark of the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun (19/12/2017)

On the 19th of December 2017, the conferral ceremony was held at the Ambassador's official residence for the Right Honourable Helen Clark, ONZ SSI PC, who has been awarded the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun from His Majesty the Emperor of Japan in the 2017 Spring Decorations. Miss Clark, as former Prime Minister of New Zealand and former Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was instrumental in promoting cordial ties and mutual understanding between Japan and New Zealand, as well as a deepened cooperation between Japan and the UNDP.

At the ceremony, Ambassador Toshihisa Takata expressed his gratitude for Miss Clark's longtime commitment to forwarding the bilateral relationships on behalf of the Government of Japan and conferred the Order and its Patent of Decoration to her. In reply, Miss Clark highlighted the importance of the deep and longstanding ties spanning a variety of fields between Japan, one of the oldest democracies in the Asia Pacific Rim, and New Zealand and the UNDP, and expressed her appreciation and joy upon receiving this decoration.



**Speech on the Conferral Ceremony for the Rt Hon Helen
Clark**

5:30 PM Tuesday, 19 December 2017

Japanese Ambassador's Residence, Khandallah, Wellington

**The Right Honourable Helen Clark and members of the
Clark family**

**Respected Friends and Former Colleagues of the Right
Honourable Helen Clark**

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen:

I am very honoured and pleased that you are all able to join me here this evening to celebrate the conferment for the Right Honourable Helen Clark of Auckland, New Zealand, who has been awarded with the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

This prestigious award, the highest in the Japanese Honour System, is in recognition of Miss Helen Clark's great contributions towards the promotion of mutual understanding and friendly and cooperative relations between Japan and New Zealand throughout her distinguished career. I would like to highlight in particular as Member of Parliament and as Prime

Minister of New Zealand, Miss Clark realized multiple high level exchanges between our two countries through visits including those by Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Crown Princess to New Zealand in 2002 and her own visit to the World Exposition in Aichi, Japan in 2005. The long list of this nature of collaborative engagements has resulted in a deeper understanding and in-depth appreciation among our peoples of the strong bond of friendship between our two countries.

We also highly appreciate the fact that Miss Clark strongly promoted the relationship between Japan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) during her tenure as Administrator. Japan and the UNDP expanded cooperation on pressing global issues such as eradicating poverty, realizing sustainable development, building more resilient and inclusive communities. Miss Clark notably showed strong support for initiatives by the Government of Japan such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) held recently in 2013 and 2016, the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015, and the World Assembly for Women (WAW!) since 2014, by personally attending many of these conferences.

Through such activities, Miss Clark has made a significant contribution towards enhancing the mutual friendship between Japan and New Zealand, as well as the partnership between Japan and the UNDP.

All throughout these years of unwavering commitment and dedication as a leading official of the New Zealand Government and the UNDP, Miss Clark visited Japan at least twenty times, one of the top

records for the number of visits so far by such a renowned and highly regarded foreign dignitary. She is one of the best friends Japan could wish for, not only in New Zealand but also in the international community.

I hope that the Miss Helen Clark would continue to be the vital catalyst for more diverse modes of exchanges, interactions, and collaborations to further strengthening and deepening the already flourishing bilateral ties between our two countries and peoples.

Here I wish to share with you my personal and recent experience regarding Miss Helen Clark. I have had two occasions to go back to Japan during the past three months. On board the Air New Zealand flight, I watched a couple of times a very good documentary film “My Year with Helen”. As you may know the ending of the story is a disappointing one, but I felt very much energized and encouraged when I got off the plane after a long-haul flight between Auckland and Tokyo. I wondered why and I did not know, but I guess that the feeling of being energized and encouraged is common to everyone who comes in contact with Miss Helen Clark, either directly or indirectly like through watching a film.

Let me conclude my remarks by expressing once again my heartfelt congratulations to Miss Helen Clark on being bestowed this decoration, and I wish for her continued good health, happiness, and success to all her current and future undertakings. Thank you.