



Australia and Japan: Moving Forward Together in Our Region

Lecture by His Excellency Alistair McLean
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of Australia to Japan

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Capitol Tokyu Hotel

On April 11, 2006, the International Institute for Policy Studies, with support from The Nippon Foundation, hosted a lecture by Australian Ambassador to Japan Mr. Murray McLean entitled “Australia and Japan: Moving Forward Together in Our Region.” The lecture took place at Capitol Tokyu Hotel.

Ambassador McLean opened his remarks by pointing out that this is the thirtieth year of exchange based on the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, and that the relationship between the two countries is such that Australian Prime Minister John Howard has asserted that Australia has no closer ties in Asia than its ties with Japan. The Ambassador went on to express the following ideas in his address.



Although Japan and Australia continue to strengthen their ties across an increasingly wide range of areas (with cooperation in Iraq a prime example), the two countries have enjoyed a particularly friendly, tight-knit relationship for more than a hundred years in the realm of trade and other economic activities.

For over 40 years, Japan has been Australia's largest export destination; it accounted for over 20% of Australia's total volume of exports last year. This not only surpassed the total for all ASEAN nations and the total for Europe, but was over triple the figure for the United States and 1.8 times the figure for China.

Moreover, figures indicate that this relationship continues to grow even closer: Australia's volume of exports to Japan has increased by 65% over the past 10 years and grew by 28% last year alone.

In the realm of security too, of course, Japan and Australia have a longstanding relationship that has endured since they were allies in World War I. The two countries share extremely similar values and systems, and both place importance on a continued US presence in the region.

Furthermore, both countries are leading providers of aid in the region, and they share a high-level understanding of serious problems affecting the region and the world as a whole. It is because the two countries share such high-level values and opinions that Australia strongly supports Japan's becoming a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Having such high-level values and opinions in common has also made it possible for the two countries to maintain a relationship of close cooperation in their activities in Cambodia and East Timor, their response to the tsunami in Indonesia, and their noteworthy activities in Iraq.

Of course, the countries also continue to develop relationships of cooperation in many other areas, such as preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, enacting terrorism countermeasures, and preventing avian influenza.

Australia is working to maintain and develop friendly ties with China, and it is also looking to China to play a constructive role in Asia-Pacific regional affairs through such forums as the Six-Party Talks. In regard to the East Asia Summit, given that APEC and ARF have already established their importance in this role, it is important for Japan and Australia to work with the United States in cultivating cooperative relations, including the building of a Free Trade Agreement.

After expressing his opinions on this wide range of subjects, Ambassador McLean fielded questions from the audience and then concluded his address.