

**Lead off remarks by Eiichi Kawahara, CG of Japan in Miami,  
on “Japan—US People to People Exchange”  
At Hilton Seattle, on October 7, 2012**

**35<sup>th</sup> Joint Meeting of Japan-US SEUS and Southeast US/Japan Associations.:**

Joint meeting was held in Tokyo, from September 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> , with the theme “In Harmony with Tradition and Innovation”. About 350 business people participated. U.S. delegation was led by five state governors; the governors of Georgia, NC, SC, TN & Mississippi as well as FL Secretary of State and Alabama Secretary of Commerce.

Japanese Co-Chair: Hiromasa YONEKURA, U.S. Co-Chair is Mr. Jack Bovender from TN. Special appreciation was expressed by Japanese Co-Chair for the extensive support that the U.S. has provided Japan after March 11; he also reiterated the significance of the ties and strong bonds of friendship between Japan and Southeast U.S. States.



Keynote address was made by Dr Akihiko Tanaka, President of JICA, informing of Japan U.S. joint efforts/collaboration of assistance in various countries and regions such as Afghanistan, Myanmar and in the African region. Mr. Christopher LaFleur, Senior Adviser at McLarty Associates, was the keynote speaker for the American side, and he expressed views on possible Japan-U.S. partnership in energy field and the expectation and call for Japan to join TPP negotiation; he also added to the importance of joint collaboration on issues such as North Korea, Iran and China.



U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Hon. John Rouse, made luncheon speech about closer U.S.-Japan relations after March 11, the importance of Japan-U.S. security and

alliances, and ongoing Tomodachi projects with the support of Japanese companies.

The Japan SEUS joint session's agenda included:

a) Investment environment in southeastern U.S. and the improved measures Japan should take as a valued gateway for U.S. business to Asian market.

b) Exchange of views on ongoing projects by Japan Keidanren for future oriented smart cities, which are eco-friendly, energy efficient, and natural disaster resilient; and the expected roles of local governments, as wells as central government, to facilitate implementation of these projects nationwide.

c) Views on strengthening of infrastructure and supply chains, so that in the event of large scale natural disasters, such as March 11's, a faster recovery is possible. These examples included establishment of large scale communications satellite networks and risk diversion by not limiting production bases to one region but to have them spread out nation-wide. These views were not meant for exchange sake but for possible Japan-US joint business.



U.S. delegations expressed high appreciation to Japanese side on their well-managed meeting program. The next joint meeting will be hosted by the State of Mississippi in late Sept. next year.

My message at the annual joint meeting included our appreciation for U.S. strong and most timely support in unprecedented large scale after the great earthquake & Tsunami, and the introduction to new Japanese initiative called “Kizuna project” for next generation’s exchange program as announced during the joint press conference by PM Noda and President Obama in Washington DC in the end of April this year.

### Kizuna Project



students went to Japan this past June and July – twenty three students from Florida also participated- and the Japanese students will come to the U.S. in different groups from October to March.

It is an exchange program of two thousand high school students, one thousand from each country, for the promotion of mutual understanding through visits to Tohoku, the region devastated by the Great earthquake and Tsunami March last year, and other parts of Japan. The American



To follow up on these 23 students experience, I hosted a dinner for representatives of the student group, their Japanese language teacher and Broward County Schools Superintendent and Davie City Mayor, in whose jurisdiction these students attend school. The students shared about the wonderful time they had in Japan. They related about their visit to Tohoku, the people they met and how much they enjoyed Japanese high school life and people's hospitality, their trips to Nagoya, Kyoto and Osaka. They



agreed that it was an eye-opening experience for them to see the real Japan. This is certainly a splendid exchange program for youths who are receptive to any differences with full of curiosity.

(Photo: From left side, the second is Superintendent of Broward county and the third is mayor of Davie )

The Schools Superintendent and the Mayor expressed the importance of having Japanese language and culture courses in high school despite the strict budget for education. Nonetheless, the Superintendent started re-examining how to maintain Japanese courses in high school in the county. They informed the community of this exchange program in their website and invited the students to City Commissioners'

meeting in August to share their experience in Japan.

### **JET Memorial HIGH SCHOOL Student Invitational Program:**

In Florida, We also sent high school students to Japan under the JET Memorial invitation, last year and this year, as part of more than 30 U.S. students invited through the program. The visit to Japan and intensive Japanese language training program was highly appreciated here by high schools and students. This program is boosting the teaching of Japanese at the high schools selected for the program.

### **Reinvigorate JETAA:**

Hundreds of Japanese local governments regularly receive young American university graduates as JET/AET for two or more years and enjoy the hospitality of Japanese local community. Now the number of U.S. JETAA exceeds 27,000 according to the CLAIR secretariat. These JETs are common assets for both U.S. and Japan. In Florida, I encourage their participations in Japan related activities.

In Tampa for example, the JETAA meet every month and invites Japanese students or teachers their activities. They organize “Natsu-Matsuri”, summer festival, for children at a community park. The festival was attended and enjoyed by both Japanese residents and Tampa Bay area community. The University of South Florida offers Japanese courses and they invite JETAA members to the classes to share about Japan.

### **Promote Sister -City Relations:**

In Florida, we have ten-sister city and state relations: Some universities have partnership agreements with Japanese universities and colleges. Examples of most active sister-cities with Japan include:

- Kagoshima City and-City of Miami
- Fujisawa City and City of Miami Beach
- Urayasu City and City of Orlando
- Gero City and City of Pensacola
- Takamatsu City and City of St. Petersburg



- Miyazu City in Kyoto and City of Delray Beach, where superb Morikami Museum and Garden is located
- Wakayama Pref. and State of Florida: Both Governors exchanged notes on the Orange partnership last November at State capital of Tallahassee.

These are examples of local governments annually exchanging young people, as well as mayors. These are well organized exchanges of citizens at grass roots levels. Our consulate is in constant contact with the coordinators of these international exchanges and invites them to encourage their activities.



I visited Gero City in mid-September after attending Japan SEUS joint meeting in Tokyo with Chairman of CC Pensacola. City Mayor and citizens of Gero received us well. My purpose was to thank Gero citizens for their good contribution to the celebrations of the one centenary anniversary of Japanese Sakura gift to US. The Mayor indicated to me every junior high school to which a JET/AET has been deployed. I met two JET/AETs who have connection with Pensacola or Florida. They very much enjoyed life in Gero.

### One Centenary of Sakura Gift to US:



Under the initiative of Ambassador Fujisaki and with good coordination of our embassy colleagues, the one centenary anniversary celebrations were held in most states this spring.

In subtropical Florida, we celebrated in Pensacola, located in the far northwest part of the peninsula. We had support from the University of West Florida and citizens of sister city of Gero.



The University President organized an excellent

ceremony with the attendance of U.S. House Representatives, FL State governmental high officials, City of Pensacola Mayor, members of the local chamber of commerce, and university students. The Japanese community in the area also participated in the event.

Gero has dispatched junior high school exchange missions to Pensacola for 19 years, and leaders of those exchange missions donated to buy 60 young cherry trees.

With support of Japan Foundation, our Embassy and other resources, we planted 100 young cherry trees on university campus, new community park in the city, and on grounds of Japanese affiliate company in Pensacola. 20 Gero Junior high school students also participated in the ceremony and events.



This concludes my remarks based on my grass-root activity .  
Thank you. (end)