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Remarks at the American Chamber of Commerce
“Person of the Year” Award Ceremony

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I wish to thank you most sincerely, Mr. Whitson, for your kind introduction and the most generous citation on your designation of me as the ACCJ 2009 Person of the Year. I really am not sure whether I deserve such an honor, but I humbly accept this with deep gratitude to you and your colleagues in the ACCJ. As a matter of fact, this year marks the 40th anniversary of JCIE, and this provides us with an excellent impetus to undertake several commemorative events with special emphasis on reinvigorating the US-Japan cooperative relationship. So much so, this recognition from the ACCJ has a very special meaning to me and my institution.

This honor I have received from the ACCJ reminds me of the support, encouragement, friendship, and cooperation that I have had the good fortune of receiving from so many American friends as well as Japanese friends. I wish I could cite some of the names of these friends and collaborators, but the list is too long and I may not be able to finish it in the 30 minutes allotted for my presentation if I were to go over the list. What I wish to emphasize here, though, is that these friends have come from diverse sectors including politics, business, philanthropic organizations, NGOs, and so on. One additional group I should make special mention of is a group of dedicated staff members of JCIE in Tokyo as well as those of JCIE/USA, based in NY, without whose help I simply could not have made any meaningful accomplishments. Then there was Chiyoko Yamamoto, a graduate of Newton College of Sacred Heart in Boston, who also had so many American friends, who allowed her husband to take the reckless initiative of creating an organization of his own, and who helped his efforts in the international exchange field in many ways. She would have appreciated this occasion more than anybody else, but she passed away two years ago.

Without any question, the number of these friends and collaborators from the United States far outnumber those from other parts of the world, and I am very proud of this. Though it may be out of fashion in Japan nowadays to brag about having many

American friends, I am ready to go up to the rooftop any time to proclaim the importance I attach to the US-Japan relationship. This positive attitude of mine toward the United States may have been developed through my direct exposure to the United States during the period that may be characterized as a golden era of American idealism. I studied in Wisconsin between 1958 and 1962, and as mentioned in the ACCJ journal article, I was lucky enough to have a personal encounter with some of the torch bearers of that era, some prominent and some nameless.

To start with, I had the privilege of serving lunch to the presidential candidate, John F. Kennedy, when he gave a speech at my school—St. Norbert College in Green Bay—and his speech had a huge impact on me. When I went on to Marquette University in Milwaukee for my graduate work, some of my friends signed up for the Peace Corps and went out to Africa, the Middle East, and so forth, responding to the call of the new president, John F. Kennedy. Then there was a rise of the civil rights movement just when I was at Marquette, and I was able to work in a community of black people as a volunteer under a rather famous or notorious activist by the name of Father Groppe. Though difficult, the daunting process of integration was truly impressive to me. Another major event taking place while I was in the United States was Vatican II in Rome, which, in brief, led the Catholic Church to emphasize “love and community” over the Ten Commandments. This had a deep impact on my way of thinking as a Catholic. In the Easter of 1962, some of us in a study group of Catholics at Marquette drove to a church close to Chicago for the Easter vigil, and we were deeply moved by the mass there, where the priests faced the congregation instead of looking at the wall with the cross, and the whole church sang glorious hymns in vernacular English. I just felt that there was a birth of a dynamic church that could unite people for the benefit of society at large dealing with diverse challenges together. I hope you all would not think that I have been promoting international exchange activities under the command of Rome. In fact, around that time I gave up my earlier aspiration to become a priest, and became excited about the prospect of building a community across the national boundaries through dialogue and exchange. I believe this exposure to the golden era of American idealism influenced me to pursue a professional career as a promoter of so-called “international exchange.” I almost forgot one more important episode of my exposure to the golden era of American idealism. It was my direct contact with Vince Lombardi who took the Green Bay Packers down the glorious path toward the national championship. The Packers have had a spring camp at St. Norbert College over the years, and upon his arrival in Green Bay to take up the post he had lunch in the school

dining room, and I served him lunch. Perhaps, I learned from him a sense of dedication, professionalism, and stubbornness.

I am afraid I may have bored you with my personal experience of exposure to American idealism manifested in the small cities of Green Bay and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, but the point I wish to emphasize is that I have been significantly influenced by my American friends in diverse fields in my career pursuing international exchange activities. Obviously, the golden era of American idealism stopped being a dominant feature of the evolving international community before long. Nevertheless, even if there have been a number of cases of seeming disappearance of the idealism in the conduct of the United States as a nation, I have been impressed with a significant number of individuals and institutions from whom we can learn a great deal in tackling the formidable challenges in our society as well as in our relationship with the international community at large. As I will come to later, this learning process on my part at this point in time may not take the form of blindly following what the United States has been doing but more in the form of interaction with them as we deal with common challenges. In this sense, I hope to explore what may be the main objectives and modalities of Japan's international exchange activities with the United States and other key foreign countries presently and in the coming years.

Before coming to the main focus of my presentation, which is an exploration of the future direction of US-Japan exchange activities, I wish to reflect on the evolving objectives and modalities of the exchange activities with the changing dynamics of the US-Japan relationship over the past 40 to 50 years from our experience.

When I returned to Tokyo after getting my MBA in 1962, I joined Mr. Tokusaburo Kosaka, head of the Shin-Etsu Chemical Company, who, as an emerging leader in Japan's corporate community, had been courted by Ambassador Reischauer to work on improvement of the US-Japan relationship. With the encouragement of Ed Reischauer, Mr. Kosaka, working with some young corporate leaders such as Noboru Goto of Tokyu Railways and young political leaders such as Yasuhiro Nakasone, created the Japan Council for International Understanding and started US-Japan exchange programs, such as the invitation of Bobby Kennedy to Japan in 1961. To make a long story short, Mr. Kosaka found that he did not have any useful staff people to run these programs, and I was hired to help him on these activities.

Actually, so-called international exchange activities in the immediate post-World War II period were primarily designed to promote “goodwill and friendship,” and then to enhance “mutual understanding.” The following phase was focused on learning from the United States in diverse fields. There was a strong desire on the part of many Japanese to regard the exchange programs as opportunities to learn from the United States. One of the first major exchange programs that Mr. Kosaka entrusted me to organize was a US-Japan Classroom Teachers Program, which was a 3-month study visit of 30 Japanese classroom teachers along with 10 interpreters to the United States from 1964 for four years.

In reflecting on the evolution of US-Japan exchange activities, I am inclined to say that the Japan-US Shimoda Conference of 1967 was one of the points of departure for a new phase of US-Japan exchange activities. We had a privilege of organizing this conference working with the American Assembly. In the Atlantic relationship, public intellectuals from the United States and Europe had a number of bilateral policy dialogues such as the Bilderberg Conference and the Atlantic Assembly over the years, but this was the first time that Japan and the United States were engaged in a high-profile dialogue on an equal footing. In short, Japan was becoming a major economic power with considerable influence in the international community at large, and there clearly was an emerging need to promote policy-oriented dialogue between Japan and the United States. In addition to Mike Mansfield, the Senate majority leader, who gave a keynote speech, six senior Congressional members including Ed Muskie, John Brademas, and Don Rumsfeld participated in the conference. Several background papers were prepared for the conference, and leaders from diverse sectors in the United States and Japan participated in the conference, which produced a joint summary statement, making several recommendations. For the second Shimoda Conference in 1969, nine Congressional members including Chuck Percy, Morris Udall, and Tom Foley joined us. As a spin-off of the Shimoda, the Parliamentary Exchange Program was started in 1968 and, as of today, more than 270 Congressional members and Diet members have participated in the program. By 1990, seven Shimoda Conferences had been organized. There also was a flourishing number of joint commissions with the participation of leaders of diverse sectors in both countries, including the US-Japan Economic Relations Group of 1979, the US-Japan Advisory Commission of 1983, 1984, and 1985, all of which produced a joint report recommending areas for future collaboration between Japan and the United States.

Compared with such dynamic activities in exploring ways to deal with the bilateral frictions and to try to build a more productive relationship between the United States and Japan that were taking place in the 70s and 80s, we would have to acknowledge a general decline of such bilateral efforts in recent years. It has become difficult to bring Congressional members to Japan, and it is estimated that less than 10 Congressional members visited Japan last year as compared with close to a couple hundred Congressional members visiting China. Policy-oriented intellectual dialogues backed up by policy research activities on the US-Japan relationship have become rather stagnant, with growing interest on the part of the Japanese Diet members, policy thinkers, and members of civil society organizations in the East Asia regional community. I am inclined to think that even in the context of East Asia community building, there are ample opportunities for collaboration between the United States and Japan, but there is a general decline of interest in such activities on the part of the Japanese opinion leaders and intellectual leaders.

I am sorry to lay out this rather bleak picture of the present state of exchange and dialogue activities between our two countries, and I am also inclined to take this situation rather seriously. Yet, we still have a reservoir of intellectual and professional leaders who believe in the importance of the US-Japan relationship from diverse points of views. I, for one, believe it is not too late to try to revitalize US-Japan exchange and cooperation, and I have been exploring diverse strategies for our contributions in this field in partnership with like-minded institutions and intellectuals in both countries. The fact that we are commemorating our 40 years of joint activities with our friends in the United States makes it opportune to reassess our relationship and find ways to revitalize our relationship. What follows is several areas where we seem to find ways to contribute to the reassessment and revitalization of the US-Japan relationship. I feel that the least I can do in response to the designation of myself as a Person of the Year by the ACCJ is to come up with good action plans for a re-strengthened US-Japan partnership that may be taken up by diverse organizations in Japan and the United States, certainly including my organization of JCIE.

1. There clearly is a great need to strengthen political exchange programs between the two countries, and JCIE would regard this as a top priority in our action plans starting with the 40th anniversary. We are hopeful that we can bring several Congressional members to our commemorative events some time this year, not just for a celebration but as a starting point of a revitalized parliamentary exchange

program between our two countries. We may be able to organize one or two delegations of Diet members to the United States within this year. Many leaders of the Democratic Party of Japan have participated in the exchange programs in the past and are interested in revitalizing the exchange with the Congressional members. Fortunately, many LDP members who have been active in the exchange program have expressed their continued interest in such activities as well.

2. We will carry out related programs, such as the visit of US Congressional Staff to Japan, and the exchange program with the American Council for Young Political Leaders, in a more aggressive manner. We have chosen eight senior staff of US Congressional members out of some 30 candidates, and they will be in Tokyo for one week from February 14. The strong interest demonstrated by a number of Congressional staff people this year may be an indication of the revival of their interest in Japan. In our exchange program with the ACYPL, we are sending a delegation of local politicians, senior staff of Diet members, and political organizations to the United States for two weeks from February 21.
3. We are finding that there are growing areas of common interest where nongovernmental organizations, including NGOs in the United States and Japan can work together. JCIE has been involved in the work of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria since 2004 with the establishment of the Friends of the Global Fund, Japan, and, as a part of this task, JCIE has been taking an initiative to organize a major research/action project on health system strengthening, and we have started promoting collaboration between Japanese and American experts in this project. Actually, there have been growing opportunities in diverse areas of so-called global issues including the environment, climate change, and so forth, which would allow us to enhance US-Japan cooperation.
4. We have found over the years that people-to-people exchange at the local level is a critical foundation for good bilateral relations. The utility of such region-to-region exchange and cooperation is manifested in the 400 or so sister-city relationships between the United States and Japan. Some of these relationships are now dormant, but there have been some effective efforts to make use of human contacts, cooperative ventures, and resources available for such exchanges.

I can go on to talk more about opportunities for US-Japan cooperation, but I am afraid the time will run out before long. Before I close my presentation, I have to touch on the need to strengthen independent institutions, particularly on the Japanese side, in order for us to further promote US-Japan cooperation in diverse fields, particularly on the

nongovernmental level. Despite our awareness of the need to build a stronger infrastructure for greater interactions and cooperation, we are witnessing a very unfortunate situation of further deterioration of policy research and exchange institutions in Japan. There has been a decline in corporate contributions to these organizations, reflecting the state of the Japanese economy, and there have been major cutbacks in the government funding that many organizations have relied on in Japan. I do feel that we should be making a collective appeal on behalf of research institutions in Japan to the Hatoyama administration for the increased funding needed to enable stronger Japanese participation in international joint efforts, and we also should be making a similar appeal to Keidanren and corporate leaders to revitalize their philanthropic activities including support to policy research organizations and those dedicating themselves to enhancing US-Japan cooperation.

Yet, we, including JCIE, would have to make greater efforts to make visible accomplishments in order to make a convincing case to the government and corporate leaders that our kind of institutions are needed in our society where we have to deal with a growing number of complex challenges that the government alone cannot handle. In this connection, I reiterate my deep sense of gratitude to our friends in the ACCJ for your kind recognition of our work, and I wish to make a pledge here that we will redouble our efforts in order to live up your kindness and generosity.