

The United States - Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON), Next Generation Task Force Forum

On October 6, 2017, the CULCON (U.S. - Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange) Next Generation Task Force Forum was convened at the International House of Japan in Tokyo. It had been decided to establish “The Next Generation Task Force” at the 27th CULCON Plenary Meeting in June, 2016.

The Task Force, with the aim of fostering and enhancing the next generation of leaders in various fields, has targeted holding retreat sessions and symposia inviting young researchers and external thought leaders who are engaged in US - Japan relations.

The Japan Next Generation Task Force took the initiative in organizing this half-day forum in the form of a symposium, and invited Japan and U.S. CULCON members, U.S. Next Generation Task Force members, and intellectuals in related fields.

● Starting with teamLab

In the introductory session, Mr. Toshiyuki Inoko, founder of the digital art group “teamLab,” which draws attention to the world, to say nothing of Japan and the United States, made a presentation. He said being co-creative, which means to create things in cooperation with other people, is vital where art and technologies are combined, and that is the key to fostering the next generation. He is a person who acts according to this principle. So his presentation was the perfect introduction to this forum.



● U.S. Ambassador Hagerty's first attendance



Following the introduction, H.E. Mr. William F. Hagerty, U.S. Ambassador to Japan was introduced by Hon. Ryozo Kato, the chair of Japan CULCON (former ambassador of Japan to the United States) and he gave a speech. The ambassador, in his first attendance at a CULCON project, talked about

efforts made by the American Embassy in Japan, referring to the goal established by CULCON of doubling two-way student exchanges. He said he realized that the U.S. - Japan partnership has now moved into a new sphere.

● A keynote address by Hon. Yoshimasa Hayashi, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, who has abundant experience in the U.S.

Hon. Hayashi, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, has served as a staffer for U.S. Congress members after graduating from the Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government. He made a 15 minute keynote speech on the subject of “the next generation to



assume the U.S. - Japan relationship that I expect.” He said we are confronted with the problem of child poverty in Japan, and the United States suffers a disparity problem as depicted in the “Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis” written by J.D. Vance, or “Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis” by Robert Putnam. Hon. Hayashi recommended we should watch closely how developed countries such as Japan and the U.S. tackle these common issues, when we think of the next generations. In addition he hoped that a binational advisory panel like CULCON would make a ‘To Do List’ cooperatively and find clues to solutions.

● Understanding the Current Situation of Exchanges



In the first session, reports were submitted on fact-finding surveys of Japan - US exchanges. Dr. Amiko Nobori, a research associate of Japan Culture International Exchange (JCIE), presented interesting reports on a diverse range of exchanges. They were between governments, academia, think tanks, and grassroots exchanges. According to Dr. Nobori, interchanges in different fields have been promoted with expertise being nurtured. Interchanges even in new fields have already started but some misgivings were pointed out: regional gaps — a concentration on exchanges between big cities like Tokyo and Washington D.C.; finances — only a limited number of suppliers can ensure long-term financial support. In response to that, one discussant, Dr. Joshua Walker, vice president of APCO Worldwide, said that continuous partnerships are preferable but for the next step it would be desirable to cultivate competent people from the next generation, and that they do not have to be specialists on Japan. Also Japan and the United States should collaborate to address global issues.

● What is the next new platform?

The second session was moderated by Dr. Sheila Smith, the co-chair of the Next Generation Task Force. The panel discussed a platform for new fields for U.S. - Japan exchanges. Mr. Danny Meza, chief of staff at the office of



Congressman Joaquin Castro, referred to the importance of relationship

created sister-city exchanges such as the one between the state of Texas and a local Japanese city. Mr. James Kondo's speech was about what will lie at the intersection of politics and technology including social media; who will be the most influential at the intersection; and how we should focus on these new movements. Dr. Dava Newman talked about the importance of connecting with different people across the field of STEAM (STEM + Art), to say nothing of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education. And how combining for example, art and science is imaginable. But she wondered who could have imagined combining engineering and design? Looking back at the 2016 presidential election, Mr. Hiroyuki Akita, a commentator for Nikkei Inc., noted that the media both in Japan and in the United States should reflect on their on the dot coverage of news, which connects only big cities, and lacks a broader range of coverage. Ms. Susan Morita suggested activating alumni networks. It has already been incorporated into existing systems such as [JALD](#) (The Japanese American Leadership Delegation Program), but could be further activated as a region-to-region platform.

● How to Educate the Next Generation



The third session started with a presentation by Dr. Yukio Yanagisawa, principal of the Kaisei Academy, which has recently begun to send its alumni directly to famous universities in the United States. It is a combined middle and high school for boys and is a hot topic every year because

of its number 1 rank in Japan for the number of graduates admitted to the University of Tokyo. According to him, students consider their relationship with both younger and older schoolmates, and become unexpectedly independent in deciding their career after graduation, they do not just follow their teachers' advice. How they should build their career after studying abroad is the challenge for their future, he said.

Mr. Chuck Jones, chief executive of Lockheed Martin Japan, introduced his company which has launched the space program named 'Girl's Rocketry Challenge' which targets Japanese high school girls. He said return on investment is important for firms, and if Japan means something to the U.S. then it should invest in Japan as much as possible. Mr. Ren Ito, who has resigned his career as a diplomat to be an entrepreneur, said an 'individual' who could play a key role for U.S. - Japan relations did not have to be specialized on Japan. Getting the undiscovered gems, who have potential to be the top in their respective fields, and are interested in Japan, is more important. He also added that nurturing individuals in Japan was critical. Ms. Minami Tsubouchi considers high school students and college students as the next generation. According to her, they are interested not only in the West but also in global issues, whereas one in six children suffers poverty in Japan. She reported that she had addressed fostering role models as a leader. Capt. Keizo Kitagawa, who was the first Japanese since Sino-Japanese War to enter the United States Naval Academy from high school in Japan, said education programs for military men are multi-layered with elementary, junior, senior and college divisions. And that army, navy, and air force personnel of Japan and the United States interact respectively, and there seems to be no big difference in the required quality of leaders' education. He said eventually all they have to learn is "Once it occurs, I'll be the shield to accomplish my mission to meet the public mandate, regardless of its danger."

●A Lively Dialogue With Participants

All through the sessions, there were many opinions expressed by the audience.

We are now going through various political cataclysms. It is apparent that with only the traditional way of thinking and efforts, we will not be able to survive. That is why there were



several subjects presented in this forum that CULCON had not discussed before: the existence of younger role models including high school students; company related exchange projects (transactional exchanges); problems with mobility across fields; promoting an increase in exchange students to Japan (inbound); utilizing multi stakeholders collaboration networks, which is intrinsic to Japanese grassroots society; making use of the Fulbright Program, and other ideas to activate existing systems.

Possible cases as tangible programs for the Next Generation Task Force: Assemble a task force (or advisory group for CULCON) with the generation after the next aged from about 19 to 21; try vertical paths with the generation after the next to find what kind of career paths they will pursue. (For example one possible answer, “I’ll join the TOMODACHI program during high school, study abroad at university on a TOBITATE scholarship, and go to graduate school on a Fulbright scholarship.”) And also form expanded alumni reunions and involve related institutions with them, etc.

Fiscal resources are such a crucial issue that the priority of existing core institutions should be given to its support. The investment in new programs must be carefully done in a strategic way.

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●Challenges for the Future

The Next Generation Task Force is an ad hoc subcommittee till the 28th CULCON Plenary Meeting in June, 2018.

After this forum in Tokyo, the US Task Force Panel will have two more workshops by then and have more discussions on the subjects of



“In what fields can the United States and Japan collaborate” and “New platforms and networks,” which were popular subjects in this meeting too.

The Japanese side also will apply the valuable advice from this forum and will work hard cooperating with the U.S. side to submit productive recommendations in the next meeting in June.

★Reference Site (Responses to the Forum)

1. Tweet by H.E. Mr. William F. Hagerty, U.S. Ambassador to Japan
October 7, 2017



<https://twitter.com/USEmbassyTokyo>

2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA)

http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/p_pd/ca_opr/page11_000038.html (Japanese)

http://www.mofa.go.jp/p_pd/ca_opr/page11e_000008.html (English)

3. Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)

http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/activity/detail/2017/20171006_2.htm