

U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON)
CULCON XXIX
October 17/18, 2021
JOINT STATEMENT

Preface

When the United States-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON) was established in 1961, the U.S.-Japan alliance was under challenge, both within Japan and in the United States. In a time of geopolitical flux, CULCON was designed to help Americans and Japanese learn about each other and build partnerships outside of government that would sustain our strategic cooperation. Since its establishment sixty years ago, CULCON has made policy recommendations from a broad perspective, through shared values and ideals, with an aim to sustain and develop the Alliance in pursuit of peace, security, and prosperity. In letters to the CULCON Panels, the President of the United States and Japanese Prime Minister shared the hope that Japan and the United States will together continue to play a leading role in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world.

The U.S.-Japan relationship has been challenged by a host of new issues in the decades since the end of the Cold War, and yet it has adjusted and adapted. Global and regional relations have changed significantly. Both nations have faced shattering crises, and in these moments, Americans and Japanese have not hesitated to reach out to help each other. When the United States was attacked on 9/11, Japan was quick to offer aid to the victims of the World Trade Center and to join with the United States and its allies in opposing terrorism. During the disasters of March 11, 2011, when Japan grappled with its worst moment since the end of World War II,

the United States acted quickly to bring aid to Japan and offer its full array of resources to contend with the loss of life and the dangers of an impending nuclear meltdown. Since the outbreak of the COVID pandemic in early 2020, the world is experiencing rapid and unprecedented geopolitical and economic challenges.

Confronting the grief and hardship of the ongoing pandemic together demonstrates how solid the U.S.-Japan partnership has become. The twenty-ninth plenary session, originally scheduled for May, 2020, was postponed, as much of the world shut down to mitigate the threat of a pandemic. Seventeen months later the threat has not ended, but working together, the U.S. and Japan have supported each other, adapted to moving forward in a no-contact environment, and joined forces to help nations with fewer resources.

The two countries have harnessed technology to continue collaborating on various aspects of the geopolitical landscape, maintaining and deepening relations to defeat the pandemic. Although there remain great challenges on both sides, all indications are that our alliance is holding strong. Japanese and Americans of all generations not only know each other's cultures – and each other – well, but a vast majority in both countries support the expanding U.S.-Japan partnership.

As CULCON celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, its purpose remains as important as ever. This mutual understanding did not happen overnight, nor did it happen without sustained dialogue and the support of many

public and private leaders who have advocated for closer relations. The U.S.-Japan partnership developed through a deep and broad array of people-to-people relationships and experiences, of students, professionals, academics and government officials, forming the building blocks of meaningful engagement. As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, CULCON's focus is on the next generation stewarding this unique and ever-important alliance forward.

Despite the pandemic, Japan held the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics Games this summer, implementing rigorous health protocols to ensure the safety of all participants and protect the health of residents. Even without live spectators, the Games were a success. Japan's hospitality provided the setting and opportunity for the athletes to compete on the highest level, cheered on by a global TV/Internet audience. The Games inspired others to engage in people-to-people exchanges, including the Japan-US Friendship Commission, which presented its Nichibei Creative Artists Program exhibition at the Setagaya Art Museum. The Olympics also drove a growth in volunteerism nationwide, which earned Japan praise from around the world.

The two Panels marked CULCON's 60th anniversary with several historic projects, including an [interactive timeline](#), a panel discussion, and the "[CULCON at 60](#)" video, which was enjoyed globally. These commemorative projects highlight CULCON's uniqueness among institutions around the world.

The Panels acknowledged the vital role people-to-people exchanges play in strengthening all aspects of the bilateral relationship, from security and trade to culture

and education; and reaffirmed exchanges are one of the key pillars of the U.S.-Japan partnership. In spite of the disruptions to people-to-people exchanges the pandemic has caused, innovations in the use of technology to promote mutual understanding have flourished, and CULCON is hopeful these positive alternatives will continue to be integrated into people-to-people exchange to benefit the alliance.

It is with such wide-ranging background issues that CULCON, comprised of representatives from the government, business, academia and other sectors of Japan and the United States, convened for CULCON XXIX virtually on October 17/18, 2021. Plans to meet in person in Fukuoka, Japan, were redirected to a hybrid format, as health and safety regulations impeded travel across international and domestic borders. Thus, many of the Japanese CULCON panelists convened at the International House of Japan in Tokyo and engaged virtually with the U.S. CULCON panelists, each from his/her home location.

The modified meeting format was a reminder of what has been lost through the pandemic, with engagement limited to a virtual platform, but it also spotlighted the resilience of the Panels and their determination to continue moving forward with their work by any means.

The 29th Plenary Session was co-chaired by the Honorable KATO Ryoza, Former Ambassador of Japan to the United States, and Dr. Sheila A. Smith, John E. Merow Senior Fellow for Asia Pacific Studies, Council on Foreign Relations. The Panels received congratulatory messages from Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio and President Joseph R. Biden, delivered by SONE Kenko,

Director-General for Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Matthew Lussenhop, Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State, respectively.

Summary of Discussions

During the seventeen-month postponement of the 29th Plenary Session, the three previously extant working groups completed their work and reporting. The Reports of the Educational Exchange Review Committee (ERC), the Arts Dialogue Committee (ADC) and the Next Generation Task Force were officially submitted, and included Japan Chair KATO's hand delivery of the *ERC FINAL REPORT 2020* to former Japanese Prime Minister ABE Shinzo and then Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide, respectively. Discussion on these topics was limited to expressions of appreciation to the many panelists and experts who dedicated their time and significant expertise to implementing important recommendations. The Panels commended the efforts of the Japanese and United States governments, as well as private sector and civil society organizations that have been instrumental in supporting and advancing CULCON's past recommendations. The Reports of each of the working groups are attached as background.

Considering a new focus for their attention and resources, the two Panels have agreed to convene a binational *ad hoc* committee to follow up the discussions and examine possible topics including: 1) creating momentum in people-to-people and educational exchange; 2) nurturing next generation leadership to support the U.S.-Japan Alliance; 3) promoting shared values; 4) advancing digitization and broadening of information exchange between

the two countries; 5) exploring local and regional interchanges and new platforms for subnational diplomacy; and 6) building economic resilience. The binational *ad hoc* committee was charged with presenting recommendations to both Panels by Fall, 2022.

The Panelists dedicated their discussions to topics that would inform the deliberations of the *ad hoc* committee. The overarching theme of the discussions was the impact of COVID, and they were divided into three sessions: (1) COVID and Local and Regional Diplomacy; (2) U.S.-Japan Cooperation: Supporting a Global COVID Response; and (3) The Impact of COVID on U.S.-Japan Interchange and Education. Following is a brief summary of each discussion:

1. COVID and Local and Subnational Diplomacy

Moderated by Patricia Maclachlan, IMAI Akiko (PHP Research Institute) and Trevor Dawes made remarks from different perspectives on subnational diplomacy. Professor Imai described the foundation of subnational diplomacy as common values, including democracy, free economy and the Asia-Pacific region alliance. Potential benefits of robust local and regional diplomacy include empowering the alliance, economic security, fostering the next generation of leaders and change-makers, and possible solutions to social issues. Although grassroots-level activity was tremendously impacted by COVID, established relationships, such as through sister cities, continued to engage in meaningful exchanges of goods and support.

Mr. Dawes advocated for democratizing access to information, and demonstrated how creating more digitized content will enable more people to access vital resources,

including documentation of the social justice movement. He warned, however, of the dangers of the digital divide, and how COVID has underscored the necessity of providing reliable broadband, enabling more to fully participate in the social, cultural, economic, and financial aspects of life.

Panelists celebrated on-going local and subnational diplomacy, despite constraints of the pandemic. They applauded good examples of creativity, energy, and potential demonstrated by some local and regional areas, and the work of such organizations as Sister Cities International (SCI), Koyamada International Foundation (KIF), Junior Chamber International (JCI), the JET alumni network, the Japan-America Society network, International Student Conference, and Kizuna Across Cultures, among others. They also supported the idea of institutionalizing public/private collaboration to promote subnational diplomacy.

Panelists consider the bilateral relationship colored by the digital divide and agreed on the importance of digitization and broadening information exchange between the two countries.

2. U.S.-Japan Cooperation: Supporting a Global COVID Response

The Panels heard remarks from KATO Kazuyo/James Gannon (JCIE/USA) and DAS Camille Dawson, which focused on the collaboration of the United States and Japan in addressing global challenges together, including climate change, cybersecurity, and especially improvements to global health.

Japan and the United States, as part of the Quad, came together to distribute vaccines within the Indo-Pacific region. Japan hosted the international pledging summit for

COVAX in June, and the U.S. led a COVID summit in September. Moderated by AKITA Hiroyuki, the panels discussed U.S.-Japan cooperative leadership for the global COVID campaign as well as support for the “Last Mile Health” structure.

Panelists reiterated that global leadership is built on the mutual trust and close ties between the American and Japanese people. CULCON should continue its efforts to lead and support other organizations with shared interests.

3. The Impact of COVID on U.S.-Japan Interchange and Education

Student exchanges have been vital in building the strong U.S.-Japan Alliance and partnership that exist today. They also help Japan and the United States address global challenges as partners with shared values of freedom, democracy, and rule of law. The *ERC FINAL REPORT 2020* addressed the level of student mobility between the two countries in recent years, which has given rise to unease about the development of a next generation of stewards of the relationship.

The impact of COVID on student exchange and institutions of higher education will have a ripple effect for years to come. Moderated by William Tsutsui, the Panels heard remarks by President TAKAHASHI Yuko (Tsuda University) and President Mary Schmidt Campbell (Spelman College). They addressed the impact of COVID on exchange, especially student exchange, and also examined COVID’s effect on their individual institutions, citing concern about lost momentum in student mobility between Japan and the United States. Both presidents agreed study abroad transforms lives and described their students’ enthusiasm and strong desire to study abroad. They also commented on the

importance of continuing to support exchange on an institutional level, and to provide financial support to make exchange more accessible to all students. They also agreed that innovations in technology are critical to pivoting to an on-line learning environment; some of the innovations may be used to enhance an international experience.

Future Plans

The Panels deliberated on the importance and longevity of the U.S.-Japan partnership based on the solid Alliance, enduring friendship, and the critical role the two countries play in ensuring peace, security, economic prosperity and geopolitical stability in the Indo-Pacific region. They discussed new challenges, ranging from the crisis of climate change to pandemics to cybersecurity, and the importance of creating new economic and environmental opportunities. Most importantly, the Panels agreed the United States and Japan need to confront new realities together, with a sense of urgency, which is why CULCON's work is vital to building the next generation of stewards of the Alliance.

Taking into consideration the current geopolitical environment and global threats to health and safety, the Panels recognized the critical need to develop expertise and encourage cooperation between Americans and Japanese from diverse fields and regions. They reiterated the importance of government and private sector financial support for student exchange as well as cultural exchanges. They reiterated the critical need to promote all aspects of engagement, from grassroots to subnational to national to global.

The Panels agreed to form a binational *ad hoc* committee to follow up the discussions during

the plenary session and hone in on a set of challenges to which CULCON can apply its expertise and resources.

The Conference agreed to re-convene in 2022 in Japan for a CULCON Symposium, and in the United States in 2023 for the next CULCON Plenary Session.

For more information on U.S. CULCON, please see <http://culcon.jusfc.gov> or contact Pamela Fields, (202) 653-9800, or culcon@jusfc.gov. For more information about Japan CULCON, please see www.jpf.go.jp/culcon or contact Seiko_Maruyama@jpf.go.jp or Mami_Suzuki@jpf.go.jp.