



U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON)

CULCON 30

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Atlanta, Georgia

JOINT STATEMENT

Preface

Celebrating its 30th biannual plenary meeting, CULCON continues to make policy recommendations across a range of issues, with the goal of sustaining and advancing the alliance.

The U.S. and Japan share democratic values, robust economic ties, and an indispensable security partnership. Together, the United States and Japan have contributed globally to the advancement of technology, trade, and innovation.

We have made our nations stronger and more resilient. Japan and the United States are the largest foreign investors in each other's country. Japanese companies have established a strong presence in the U.S., creating jobs and contributing to local economies in such fields as automobile, electric and electronic machineries and trading & retail business. American companies have invested in industries such as technology, healthcare, consumer goods, and finance within the Japanese market. These investments have led to the transfer of knowledge, technology, and management practices, fostering economic growth and innovation in the U.S. and Japan.

The U.S.-Japan strategic alliance plays a crucial role in maintaining regional security and upholding a rules-based international order. Through diplomatic cooperation, military coordination, and joint efforts to address global challenges such as climate change and non-proliferation, the U.S. and Japan showcase the power of partnerships in shaping a more interconnected and harmonious world.

As both nations emerge from a global pandemic, the disruptions to people-to-people exchanges have been significant, but innovations in the use of technology to promote mutual understanding have flourished. CULCON is hopeful these positive alternatives will continue to be integrated into people-to-people exchange to benefit the alliance.

At CULCON 30, the U.S. and Japan Panels emphasized the role of people-to-people exchange as one of the key pillars of the U.S.-Japan partnership. These grassroots interactions create the vital thread binding the two nations through connections that strengthen all aspects of the bilateral relationship.

In letters to the CULCON Panels, the President of the United States and Japanese Prime Minister celebrated the strong partnership between Japan and the United States, and their shared commitment to promoting peace, prosperity, and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region and internationally. They both emphasized the importance of people-to-people ties, cultural exchange, and collaboration in various fields to strengthen the relationship and contribute to global stability and development.

CULCON 30, held at The Carter Center in Atlanta, celebrated the enduring legacy of President Carter of diplomacy, human rights advocacy, environmental stewardship, and a commitment to public service that extends far beyond his time in office. The Carter Center has long been a conduit for promoting peace and cooperation across borders, and the



CULCON Panels expressed their commitment to following his example.

The 30th Plenary Session was co-chaired by the Honorable SASAE Kenichiro, 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 Mr. KANAI Masaaki, Director-General for Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA); and Mr. Scott Weinhold, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State respectively.

Summary of Discussions

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, producing positive outcomes to increase student mobility between Japan and the U.S., promote artistic exchange, and cultivate the next generation of U.S.-Japan leaders across our societies.

At the last plenary, the CULCON Panels agreed to convene a binational *ad hoc* committee to consider a new focus for their attention and resources. The binational *ad hoc* committee was charged with presenting recommendations to both Panels by Fall, 2022.

Following in-depth and engaged discussion, the *ad hoc* committee recommended the formation of two new working groups: Information Access and Sharing in the Digital Age Working Group; and Subnational Diplomacy/Local & Regional Exchange Working Group. Both working groups were ways of addressing the larger question of how

the citizens of each country learn about the other, especially among current domestic, political, and societal challenges, including misinformation.

Subsequent to their creation in Fall 2022, each Working Group has convened twice to explore their missions, grapple with current challenges, and formulate preliminary recommendations. Each Working Group submitted an Interim Report to CULCON 30 to summarize their efforts to date.

1. Information Access and Sharing in the Digital Age Working Group (IAS WG)

The IAS WG brought together participants from both the U.S. and Japan, with a focus on enhancing access to fact-based, balanced, and affordable resources to foster mutual understanding and knowledge exchange. The Working Group's overarching mission and goal was to explore ways for U.S. and Japanese citizens to learn about each other's cultures, societies, and challenges. The Working Group emphasized two broad themes: expanding Japan Studies and Study of the United States and expanding access and sharing of digital resources.

The Working Group's discussions on a diverse range of themes, from interdisciplinary studies and digital transformation to equity and cultural understanding, highlighted the complexity of the undertaking. Collaborative efforts and innovative approaches emerged as essential tools for promoting knowledge exchange, cultural appreciation, and shared values in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. The Working Group identified the following topics and issues as ones for further consideration and exploration:

- A. **Balancing In-Person Exchange, Rural Study, and Digital Age**, to recognize the compatibility of in-person exchanges, rural study, and digital methods for comparative data collection; and highlight



the importance of immersing oneself in the country of interest rather than solely relying on digital research.

B. Addressing Information Access

Challenges and Digitization to tackle challenges posed by corporate barriers to information in proprietary databases; and collaborate to digitize materials and remove barriers to information availability. The panelists encouraged digitization projects such as that of the Toyo Bunko collection of primary sources. Panelists recommended further exploration of the role of Artificial Intelligence in information access and sharing.

C. Strengthening Databases and

Resource Sharing to emphasize the need to extend access to existing databases and share resources; and address funding requirements to support database enhancement and resource sharing initiatives.

D. Addressing Funding Requirements to Support Database Development and Resource Sharing Initiatives

to seek financial support from both the public and private sectors to digitize resources for promoting Japan Studies and Studies of the United States. The specific funding details would be determined through further discussions, considering requirements, available resources, and progress in securing cooperation from relevant universities and academic institutions. The panelists encouraged the inclusion of libraries, archives and museums in this discussion and process.

E. Understanding Study of the United States and Japan Studies Globally

to explore differing interpretations of American and Japan Studies across countries. Although STEM education is important, the panelists emphasized

language study, humanistic inquiry, area expertise, and other fundamental components of a liberal arts education.

Creating further opportunity for in-country engagement between American and Japanese scholars on these subjects is imperative.

F. Leveraging Digital Technology for New Methodologies

to recognize the potential of digital technology for innovative research methodologies; and explore possibilities such as cross-national and cross-temporal analysis facilitated by digital tools.

G. Japan and the Indo-Pacific

to note the growing interest in Japan due to its active role in the Indo-Pacific region; identify opportunities for collaboration on broader regional dynamics; and address challenges of transnational research, especially related to data access and economic security.

H. Promoting Student Exchanges and Collaboration

to highlight the significance of student exchanges, including initiatives like the JUSFC Summer Institute.

2. Subnational Diplomacy/Local & Regional Exchange Working Group (SND WG)

The SND WG was charged with “exploring the role of subnational diplomacy/regional exchange on the U.S.-Japan partnership, as well as investigating ways to enhance this important form of interaction.” The Working Group discussions endeavored to identify challenges and search for feasible solutions, with the goal of recommending policies to both governments, as well as nurture the next generation of leaders in the U.S.-Japan alliance.



A critical theme that emerged through the Working Group discussions was the importance of supporting and expanding various types of subnational diplomacy and showcasing the potential impact of such efforts on economic promotion, problem-solving, empowerment of future generations, and mutual understanding, including cultural exchange.

As national institutions of governance face multiple challenges, panelists noted the added importance of subnational diplomacy.

The Working Group identified the following preliminary topics and issues as ones for further consideration and exploration:

A. Measurement and Data Collection:

The Working Group proposed collecting and showcasing data to demonstrate the economic and cultural benefits of subnational diplomacy. They also emphasized the need for empirical evidence in highlighting successful outcomes for U.S. and Japanese public and private sector stakeholders.

B. Collecting Good Practices and Conducting Case Studies:

The Working Group proposed gathering and analyzing successful subnational diplomacy practices, including activities like sister- and friendship-city relations, and programs such as Kizuna Across Cultures, to showcase their impact on local and regional economic growth and cultural exchange. The Working Group also proposed investigating inactive relationships to potentially revive or support new ones.

C. Networking with other Organizations Involved in Subnational Diplomacy and Local/Regional Exchange:

The Working Group proposed collaborating with various organizations involved in subnational diplomacy and local/regional

exchange, such as Keidanren, JETRO, and civil society groups. The Working Group proposes gathering insights, data, and assessments regarding these activities' socio-economic impact. Additionally, the group suggested creating fora and conferences to facilitate networking and knowledge sharing among leaders from sister and friendship cities. Panelists suggested exploring other ways of promoting and leveraging existing people-to-people ties to enhance subnational diplomacy. Examples could include outreach at manga and anime conventions, engagement with Expo 2025 in Osaka, inviting greater participation in the Japan-U.S. Military Program (JUMP), and facilitating greater exchange at the gubernatorial and mayoral levels.

D. Bilateral Collaboration, Education and Cultural Exchange:

The Working Group encouraged collaboration with organizations such as The U.S.-Japan Council to create joint programs that bring together professionals, diplomats, business and local government leaders, civic leaders, and artists to address shared challenges. They also suggested establishing educational partnerships, promoting exchanges between universities and institutions, supporting high schools/colleges/universities as anchor institutions for subnational relationships, encouraging artist exchanges, and addressing generational leadership transitions through mentorship programs. Panelists also encouraged collaboration across the various organizations involved in subnational diplomacy.

E. Global and Indo-Pacific Collaboration:

The Working Group proposed extending the focus to collaborations with cities in the Indo-Pacific region to enhance subnational diplomacy efforts. They also suggested



exploring opportunities for international collaboration beyond the U.S.-Japan partnership and examining triangulation among the U.S., Japan, and emerging countries, such as Southeast Asian nations.

These international and regional subnational networks, like ASEAN Smart City Network, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and Inter Cultural City (ICC), were considered valuable for problem-solving and mutual understanding, with key common issues being funding and expertise.

F. Other Issues for Further Consideration

The Working Group identified other pertinent issues for promoting subnational diplomacy and local/regional exchange, such as funding for enhancing activities relevant to subnational diplomacy, use of communication technology to make subnational diplomacy and local/regional exchange more efficient, creating a sustainable infrastructure of subnational diplomacy, the challenge of maintaining relationships amid evolving political and social climates. The Working Group also recognized the importance of language study as a driver of cultural understanding.

3. Future Plans

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 directed both Working Groups to continue exploration of their topics with the

target of presenting a Final Report and recommendations to both governments at CULCON 31.

The Conference agreed to re-convene in 2025 in Japan for CULCON 31.

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.jpfc.go.jp/culcon or contact Nanako_Munakata@jpf.go.jp or Chihiro_Kaneko@jpf.go.jp.