

# Confirming Intentions to Enhance Private Exchanges Aiming at Development of Japan-China Relations Friendship Exchange Meeting Held in the Great Hall of the People with the Exchange Delegation Visiting China



Mr. Nikai(left) and President Xi

The Japan-China Tourism Cultural Exchange Delegation visited China with 3,162 participants and participated in the Japan-China Friendship Exchange Meeting held in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on May 23. The visit was coordinated by three associations, JATA, All Nippon Travel Agents Association (ANTA), and Japan Travel and Tourism Association. The exchange meeting achieved great results toward an expansion

of tourism exchanges between Japan and China. In the meeting, Chinese President Xi Jinping made a speech which stressed the necessity of strengthening people-to-people exchanges and coordinating conditions and environments to improve and develop the two countries' relations. At another point in the meeting, Mr. Toshihiro Nikai, chairman of ANTA who served as an honorary leader of the delegation, appealed concerning the importance of promoting tourism and cultural exchanges, pointing out that Japan-China relations are supported by deep human relationships at the private level which will be never influenced by the political circumstances of the moment.

## Xi Jinping Directly Speaks to 3,000 Participants

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who greeted the Japanese delegation at the beginning of the friendship exchange meeting to welcome them to China, told them, "It is a great pleasure that we can have the Japan-China Friendship Exchange Meeting in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing with 3,000 Japanese people in various fields who traveled a great distance to China, as one of the greatest events in recent private exchanges between our countries," and citing the words of Confucius, he said, "The coming of a friend from a far-off land, is this not true joy?"

Xi presented his view of China-Japan relations that, for over 2,000 years, peace and friendship have been the guiding principle for the people of the two countries separated by only a narrow strip of water. Looking back on the time when he visited Japan in 2009, Xi said, "I directly felt the cultural roots and historical ties which have never ended between the people of the both countries."

Xi also pointed out that, as proven by the history, China-Japan friendship projects have been beneficial to both countries and their people, and also to Asia and the world, and so we should further value, protect, and make continuous efforts for such projects. While saying that it is possible to choose a neighbor but impossible to choose a neighboring country, Xi argued that as China-Japan friendship is based on people-to-people exchanges, the future of China-Japan relations will depend

on people in the two countries. "Especially when the two countries' relations are not developing favorably, Chinese and Japanese people in various fields need to take positive action, mutually strengthen people-to-people exchanges, and coordinate conditions and environments to improve and develop the two countries' relations," Xi also stressed.

## Deep Human Relationships Supporting Japan-China Relations

Mr. Nikai expressed his appreciation for China's invitation of the delegation to a reception dinner which the Chinese president attended. "Through both good and bad times in Japan-China relations, we have been committed to promoting tourism and local exchanges, etc., between the two countries. Japan-China relations are supported by deep human relationships at the private level which will be never influenced by political circumstances of the moment," Mr. Nikai said. Regarding the large delegation of over 3,000 people, he expressed his perception that it was meaningful for each of them to have voluntarily decided to participate in the delegation in accordance with the above-mentioned beliefs.

The participants in the delegation included 23 bipartisan Diet members such as Mr. Mikio Hayashi, chairman of the Lower House Committee on Rules and Administration, who participated in the delegation on the weekend between Diet meetings; Harumi Takahashi, governor of Hokkaido Prefecture; Kazumi Nishikawa, governor of Fukui Prefecture; Shogo Arai, governor of Nara Prefecture; Kiyoshi Ueda, governor of Saitama Prefecture; and many other parties concerned with local governments. Mr. Nikai stressed that the delegation was representing Japanese enthusiasm for Japan-China exchanges, with abundant human resources represented in the exchanges of Diet members and local officials between Japan and China.

## Private Manifesto Pledging "Commitment to Japan-China Exchanges"

Mr. Nikai also referred to the importance of promoting exchanges among young people. In consideration of the fact that 500 Japanese children were invited to Hainan Island after the Great East Japan Earthquake, he indicated his willingness to "boost Japan-China friendship" by inviting 500 Chinese children to Japan and appealed for the necessity to make their best efforts for promoting private exchanges again.

In the friendship exchange meeting, Mr. Koji Kinutani, an artist painter who headed the Japan-China Tourism Cultural Exchange Delegation, read aloud the Private Manifesto for the Japan-China Friendship Exchange Meeting, saying, "We desire that this activity will become the spark that promotes further exchanges between the two countries, leading to improvement and development of the overall relations between Japan and China."

In the private manifesto, reference is made to the Japan-China Cultural Tourism Exchange Delegation (2000), the 30th Anniversary Memorial Project after Diplomatic Normalization Between Japan and China (2002), the Japan-China 30,000-People Interaction Project (2007), Japan-China