

HE Eng. Salim bin Nasser bin Said al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, it is my great honour to have your presence as the guest of honour. Your Excellency graced my national day reception last year, and this year. It is all the more pleasing and encouraging. I welcome all the distinguished members of the delegation, and thank them for joining us on this occasion.

Highnesses, Excellencies, Honorables, Distinguished Guests,

Assalamu alaikum, Good evening. I would like to extend my gratitude to you all for your kind attendance. You have given us necessary courage and energy for celebrating this day today.

Before moving forward, I would like to share with you a deep sorrow on the devastating damage caused by earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, and would like to share the sense of sympathy and condolences. As a country frequently visited by earthquakes, Japan will do its utmost in standing and cooperating with the affected people.

His Majesty the Emperor of Japan is the symbol of the State and the unity of the people, and becomes 63 years old tomorrow on February 23. As the pandemic is being over, His Majesty has resumed steps, His steps always together with His beloved people inside and outside Japan.

With Her Majesty the Empress, His Majesty visited Okinawa last year to commemorate 50 years of its reversion to Japan. Their Majesties visited London last year to commemorate the glory of Her Majesty the Queen and attend Her State Funeral. His Majesty the Emperor has thus resumed steps, His steps always together with people.

This year, Japan assumes G7 Presidency, and is seated in the UN Security Council. As confronted with many difficulties and uncertainties, we need to enhance attention and efforts to sustain the free and open international order as based upon the rule of law. Japan will do its utmost.

Japan has recently revised its national security strategy. With its enhanced resilience and capabilities, Japan will do its utmost and proactively contribute to peace and security.

Both Japan and Oman have based their prosperity upon trade and economy, and have cherished the long standing and mutually benefitting business relations between the two countries as well.

Japan is proud as the Japanese companies were among the first group to extend long-term LNG offtake contracts, as witnessed and graced by HE Minister Aufi in December last year. We will obviously take a bold look to the future as well, duly taking into account Oman Vision 2040, and collaborate for our common agenda.

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of Japan-Oman diplomatic relations. This has given us a good reason to promote cultural and sports exchanges, particularly in the post pandemic season. The same will be further expanded this year to business and academic exchanges, as well as the exchange between young generations.

I thank and keep asking for continued support from the Foreign Ministry, Oman Japan Friendship Association, and many other organisations and entities who help sustaining people-to-people connections.

One of such organisations is Hiroshima-Oman Friendship Association, very active at Hiroshima where my Prime Minister will host G7 Summit meeting this year. We are very lucky to welcome the delegation from Hiroshima joining us today. Their presence speaks volumes to our friendship.

I appreciate my Embassy staff, the Crowne Plaza Muscat and many people making this occasion possible. I also extend many thanks to Sumitomo Corporation, Gulf Japan Food Fund and WA Candy for decorating this party with their demonstrations. The best reward to reciprocate their efforts is for all the distinguished guests to really enjoy it. Please enjoy this gathering.

While wishing for the health and continued prosperity of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, I would like to celebrate with you all the warm and happy birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan. I wish you a very good evening. Shukran Jazīlan.