



*Address*

*by*

*Mr François Hollande  
President of the French Republic*

*on the occasion of the Imperial Banquet hosted by*

*Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan*

*Tokyo*

*Friday 7 June 2013*

**Speech for the State dinner given  
in your honour  
by the Emperor of Japan**

Your Imperial Majesty,  
Madam,

Allow me to thank you for the warmth of your welcome and your words of greeting. By welcoming me here this evening, you honour the whole French people. I in turn express to you France's respect, esteem and friendship.

At your invitation, I am making my first State visit to your country. My visit has just one purpose: to confirm France's determination to strengthen further its ties with Japan.

Our relations are already exceptional. Claude Lévi-Strauss, a great French intellectual, described them thus: *"Separated by immense spaces, situated on their fringes, France and Japan appear to turn their backs on one another. And yet the two countries share the same destiny."*

Our attachment to democracy unites us. That is the message that I addressed this morning to the representatives of the Japanese people this morning before the Diet, Asia's oldest Parliament. Together, our two



countries promote throughout the world respect for fundamental rights and the freedom of peoples.

Our countries are servants of peace. France stands at your side to ensure that Japan obtains its rightful place on the United Nations Security Council.

Our cultures are also shared. Artistic and intellectual exchanges preceded the establishment of diplomatic relations between us 155 years ago.

As long ago as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, French craft workers drew inspiration from Japanese artefacts. The great refinement of your creations was a subject of marvel for our greatest artists. It was in France that the "Japanism" that left such a deep imprint on European art from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was born. This was one factor that triggered the Impressionist revolution. The house and garden of Claude Monet in Giverny, which Prince Hitachi visited in 2007, still render a vibrant homage today to your aesthetics.

Admiration for Japanese culture has never waned since. The interest of the French people today for Japan is now felt by very many in our population, embracing literature, gastronomy, cinema, the performing arts, architecture and the martial arts.

The celebration next year of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of French-Japanese cultural relations with the creation of the French-Japanese House in 1924 by Paul Claudel and Shibusawa Eiichi will

provide an opportunity to reaffirm our shared commitment to cultural diversity.

Throughout their history, our two countries have developed particularly fruitful partnerships, most notably in the economic and technological spheres. That is why I intend to expand our cooperation in all fields: political, economic, cultural, scientific and educational.

Your Imperial Majesty,

In the face of the tragedy of Fukushima barely two years ago, you were particularly involved in comforting the victims. In France, a spontaneous movement of solidarity arose.

Few countries could have overcome such a trial with unity, dignity and courage. Thanks to its moral qualities, your country has succeeded in achieving an exemplary reconstruction of the affected areas. France is willing to accompany you as you travel down this road.

Your Imperial Majesty,

I am very honoured by Your personal involvement in the development of our relations, as shown by Your most recent visit in 1994. It would be a great joy for us to welcome You to our country along with Your family.

In that expectation, I shall now, Your Imperial Majesty, raise a toast in the honour of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Japan and Her

Imperial Majesty the Empress. I wish prosperity and happiness to the Japanese people.