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Remarks

DIANA DEGETTE

The Honorable Diana DeGette is a member of the US House of Representatives representing the State of Colorado. She serves as ranking member of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation and as Chief Deputy Minority Whip of the House Democratic Leadership. The following is the text of her opening remarks.

Tadashi, it is such an honor to be here again with you and my friends from JCIE, and I thank you for inviting us to join you for this historic New Shimoda Conference, especially in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the organization. Henry Kissinger once said, "No foreign policy—no matter how ingenious—has any chance of success if it is born in the minds of a few and carried in the hearts of none."

I think I can speak today for all of my distinguished colleagues from the United States Congress in assuring you that we carry in our hearts the cherished partnership between the United States and the nation of Japan. Almost all of us have personal connections to this great land that have helped inform our lives and our decisions in public service.

As many of you know, I was born at the Tachikawa Air Force base while my father was stationed here.

Congresswoman Hirono was also born here and lived here as a child—going on to cherish her heritage as she became the first naturalized Asian US citizen to be elected to Congress.

As thousands of US military families do every year, Congresswoman Davis and her young family picked up their lives in America to come and live here while her husband was serving in Japan.

Our colleague from the Senate, Senator Webb, has deep ties to Japan from his time serving as a US Marine, to his travels as Secretary of the Navy, to his time here examining Japanese history and culture as a journalist and writer.

Congressman Petri has spent many years studying the close strategic relationship between the United States and Japan, and has visited this region many times.

And we continue the rich exchange between our two nations as we bring Congresswoman Lowey to this country for her first—but certainly not her last—visit.

These personal ties are more than just inspiration for our visit, however. As we stand here today, they reflect the depth and success of our two countries' great partnership over many decades. Who would have thought that a young girl born here—as a result of our productive military partnerships—would return decades after as a United States Congresswoman to work with your government to build upon those partnerships. Or that a brave young soldier stationed in Okinawa would one day represent his nation here as a US Senator as we work together to forge a new path forward in the 21st century. Because of these connections, each of us feels a personal responsibility to continue to advance the mutual alliance between our two countries. We may come here to this conference with different backgrounds, ideologies, and legislative priorities, but we also come with a shared commitment to this nation and to revitalizing our long and successful alliance with one another.

The nature of this conference and our delegation also reflects the new global paradigm. Whether literally or figuratively, we have all become citizens of the world—living a shared experience like never before and bringing our views, values, challenges, and agendas around the globe in the blink of an eye.

For centuries, the relationship between countries has been defined by borders. But today—in a world where an Iowa farmer can video chat with a Kyoto manufacturer in real time, and a Japanese soy sauce company can manufacture its product in Wisconsin with US-grown soybeans—the new metric is connections. And the new challenge is how to successfully leverage those connections into relationships, productive relationships, based on the understanding that the difficulties we face are most often not ours alone, and are usually best confronted by working in concert with our partners and allies.

With the international economy still recovering from the global recession, and myriad other challenges confronting our world—both separate and together—we come here today with a fresh objective: revitalizing the US-Japan relationship to build on the experiences of the past and secure a stronger future for both our nations.

For many years, the relationship between our countries has been focused primarily on the US-Japan security alliance. Without question, we now live in a world where the notion of global security is tenuous at best. Traditional and

nontraditional enemies threaten peace from the Middle East to the ravaged deserts of the Sudan to the instability on the Korean peninsula. And while we always applaud the spread of democracy across the globe, the path to freedom can most certainly be a dangerous one.

As two of the world's strongest democracies, our alliance not only stands as a beacon to nations in turmoil, but for each of our countries it reaffirms our strength and security. The security alliance is, undoubtedly, an important and irreplaceable foundation of our partnership. But one need only look to our shared challenges to see that if we are limiting our interaction and dialogue to the confines of that security alliance then we are failing to take full advantage of all our relationship has to offer. In truth, many of our greatest challenges right now are happening outside the security realm.

Over the past few years, both of our nations have been forced to confront a recession that ignored international borders as it crippled economies across the globe. During this crisis, and as we have managed the fallout, it has become clear that as our economies become more and more interdependent, our economic relationships must evolve as well. As two of the leading economies in the world, in the coming months and years it is imperative that we work together to minimize the possibility of another financial crisis for either of our nations. No longer can we focus solely on shoring up our own markets—not at a time when a shudder in the NASDAQ can, and most likely will, have profound effects on the Nikkei.

The very nature of this global economy means that not only are our markets connected, but our health concerns are as well. A viral challenge in a small village can become a pandemic for a major city—seemingly overnight. From the SARS outbreak to the more recent H1N1 scare, we have seen just how easily and quickly pandemics can debilitate individuals and countries throughout the globe. The aggressive nature of global health in the 21st century mandates that we work together to stop outbreaks and treat patients using our shared medicines and technologies. So while the interconnected nature of the modern world has multiplied the impact of these epidemics, it has also laid the framework for major breakthroughs in medical research.

As many of you know, I am a major proponent of stem cell research. So I am particularly proud of the fact that teams working in Japan and the United States have achieved some of the most crucial advancements in this field. Through partnerships like ours, induced pluripotent stem cells studied in a lab in Kyoto can one day be used to correct glaucoma in Boston.

But in the 21st century, a looming threat hovers over each and every one of us. The environmental, health, and economic implications of climate change will likely dominate the challenges of the next several decades. It was not too far away from here that the Kyoto Protocol was reached. Yet in the years since, we have struggled to enforce a collective approach to slowing and mitigating the effects of global warming. In 2009, I traveled as part of the US delegation to the United

Nations Climate Change Conference. During my time in Copenhagen it became even more evident that this is not an issue we can afford to confront individually as nations. Our climate is changing—and rapidly—and it is vital that we work together to ensure we stem its negative impacts and secure a healthy planet for our future generations.

As we can see, in today's global reality, the issues we debate in Washington are often variations on the very same questions being asked here in Tokyo. So, as we both struggle to tackle these issues and more, we must acknowledge and embrace that we have much to learn from one another, and much to share. Today's conference will offer us a unique opportunity to assess our relationship, analyze our challenges, and set a course forward. The agenda for our day will enable us to tackle the realities we face—together and separately—while charging us to develop concrete means to deepen and revitalize our critical partnership. This spring, we in Washington will be proud to welcome Prime Minister Kan and continue this type of dialogue that can only serve to make our countries' connections to one another even stronger.

In the decades since our alliance was formed, much has changed for both of our nations. Laws, leadership, and life itself have evolved dramatically for our countries, our cultures, and indeed the entire world. But the one constant between us has been this alliance. I believe those of us here today all look forward to revitalizing that partnership and helping to prepare our countries to confront the elusive challenges of the 21st century and beyond. And as the six of us come here today, representing the United States Congress, bringing our personal ties to this country and our personal passion for all our success, know that we carry in our hearts the belief that through this partnership we can improve the future of both our nations, if not the world.