

## Informal Meeting

Baroness Catherine Ashton  
High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security  
Policy Vice-President of the European Commission

“EU Foreign Policy after the Lisbon Treaty: Challenges and Opportunities”

Date/time: April 28, 2010, 14:30-16:00

Venue: Large Conference Room, Japan Institute of International Affairs

Moderator: NOGAMI Yoshiji, President, Japan Institute of International Affairs

Commentators: OKAMOTO Yukio, President, Okamoto Associates, and former Special  
Advisor to the Prime Minister

YOSHIZAKI Tomonori, Director, Research Office No. 5, Research  
Department, National Institute for Defense Studies

[Opening speech by Baroness Ashton]

I am greatly honored today to have this opportunity for dialogue with policymakers in Japan, and I look forward to learning the participants' views on the EU as we consider the prospects for cooperation between the EU and Japan. Let me begin by speaking on the changes in the European landscape stemming from the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and on the Treaty's potential. The Lisbon Treaty is our great hope for consolidating the political work of Europe. I gained a real sense of the strength of the world's economic ties in my previous position as Commissioner for Trade in the European Commission but, by contrast, I feel that we are still in the early days of political dialogue. The Lisbon Treaty offers a means for creating genuine opportunities to establish close ties in both political and economic affairs. As an official responsible for foreign policy, my role is first to speak as a single individual on behalf of the interests of the 27 EU states and second to conduct foreign policy – concerning both civilian and military affairs – under one umbrella. Counter-piracy measures off the shores of Somalia and support to Kosovo and Palestine are part of this brief. By speaking as one, Europe can have a stronger and more effective voice. My utmost priority is to establish a service representing Europe via the External Action Service. Relations with neighboring and nearby countries are extremely important priorities for Europe, and considerable time, energy and resources have been expended in bettering them, especially relations with the Western Balkans (Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, etc.), Ukraine and its new president, and the geographically proximate Middle East. Another issue to be addressed is the type of cooperative relations we should build with our strategic partners. We would like to develop relations on a strategic basis with such countries as the US, Japan, China, Russia, India, South Africa and Brazil.

[Comment: OKAMOTO Yukio]

There are several areas, including Somalia and Afghanistan, in which Japan and the EU can cooperate. If the EU seeks cooperation from Japan, though, the EU will need to better understand our problems. For instance, North Korea's nuclear weapons and China's military buildup are more important issues for Japan than Iran's nuclear program, and Europe could help put a stop to China's rapid military expansion. Global warming will likely melt the ice in the Arctic seas in the near future and open up a direct route between Europe and Japan. I eagerly anticipate greater dialogue between Japan and Europe that will shift our strategic partnership from rhetoric to something more substantial.

[Comment: YOSHIZAKI Tomonori]

The EU and Japan are innately and extremely naturally strategic partners. They are both

global civilian powers and they both have defensive capabilities capable of being utilized in global peacekeeping activities. Thus far our cooperation has been almost by chance but it would seem, looking at activities in Somalia, Afghanistan and elsewhere, that the basic values and approaches of Japan and the EU are similar. We should thus move from an “partnership by chance” to a “partnership by design.” In reforming key security aspects of the peacebuilding process, for example, we can cooperate through long-term commitments to the locations in question. The problem is how to operate the partnership.

[Question-and-answer session]

In response to Mr. Okamoto’s comment, Mrs. Ashton stated her basic view that she could well understand Japan’s concerns about North Korea’s nuclear weapons and that we must keep an eye on global issues even as we seek better relations with our respective neighboring states. She added that each country’s perspective on the world is sustained by its respective historical, political and cultural background and that comprehending differences presents difficulties even within the EU, and she emphasized the importance of mutual understanding. On China, she declared the key point to be whether cooperation in engaging China would be more effective. In answer to Mr. Yoshizaki’s comment, she mentioned that it would be more beneficial for Japan and the EU to cooperate based on a plan and that her current visit to Japan was designed to help make the Japan-EU partnership work.

In the remaining time, questions were posed spanning the full range of EU foreign policy – the impact of the Lisbon Treaty on consensus formation within the EU, the lessons learned by the EU from the Iraq War, the EU’s foreign policy guidelines toward neighbors such as Russia, Kosovo and Israel, the idea of an EU embargo on weapons exports to China, cooperation and division of roles between the EU and NATO, the EU’s Asia strategy, etc. – and these prompted lively debates. The possibility of pursuing EU-Japan dialogue through think tanks and other efforts at the civil group level as well as specific areas of future EU-Japan cooperation also came up for discussion.