

For Immediate Release

Amidst Trade Talks and Disaster Recovery, the Commitment to Strong U.S.-Japan Relations Remains Vital

Honolulu, HI – The U.S.-Japan Council (USJC) and the APEC 2011 Hawai'i Host Committee co-hosted an international trade reception at the Bishop Museum on Friday to celebrate the continued strength of the U.S.-Japan relationship.

"Under President Obama, the U.S. has an increasingly stronger presence in the Asia Pacific region and I am extremely encouraged by that," said Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda at the reception. "Japan and the U.S. must partner in order to play a major role in the Asia Pacific Region."

Noda was joined by Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gemba, U.S. Secretary of Commerce John Bryson, U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk and U.S. Senate President Pro Tempore Daniel K. Inouye, all making remarks.

Additionally, more than 600 leaders attended the reception including Minister Yukio Edano from Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), Japanese Ambassador Ichiro Fujisaki, Congresswomen Mazie Hirono and Colleen Hanabusa, Hawai'i Governor Neil Abercrombie, Honolulu Mayor Peter Carlisle and other officials.

In his remarks, Senator Inouye focused on the extraordinary outpouring of support after the Great East Japan Earthquake, including Operation TOMODACHI, led by the U.S. Military and Japan Self-Defense Forces, and the response by the people of Hawai'i.

"The strong and cherished bond between Japan and Hawai'i and the United States was made evident as millions of dollars were raised to support the relief effort," said Inouye who serves on USJC Board of Councilors. "Additionally, food, clothing, prayers and aloha were sent to support the survivors."

He also spoke of a new pact by public and private sector leaders to help lessen risks from disasters. "The University of Hawai'i, PACOM, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and a host of agencies and private national foundations are joining forces to make investments in disaster risk reduction and community resiliency in the Asia Pacific region," explained Inouye. U.S.-Japan Council President Irene Hirano Inouye was among the signatories of the joint statement of intent.

The U.S.-Japan Council is also working on the TOMODACHI initiative, a public-private partnership led by the U.S. Government, the Japanese Government and the U.S.-Japan Council. The initiative was forged after the Great East Japan Earthquake to invest in Japan's next generation and thereby deepen relations between the U.S. and Japan. TOMODACHI carries out its mission by supporting initiatives that benefit Japan's short-term needs and long-term competitiveness with a focus on cross-cultural exchange.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supports TOMODACHI, which focuses in part on education and leadership development. "Together, we want to create a TOMODACHI generation that is deeply committed to the future of our relationship," said Clinton at the 2011 U.S.-Japan Council Annual Conference.

The U.S.-Japan Council is a 501 (c) 3 educational non-profit organization that contributes to strengthening U.S.-Japan relations by bringing together diverse leadership, engaging stakeholders and exploring issues that benefit communities, businesses and government entities on both sides of the Pacific. Established in 2009, USJC collaborates with institutions and organizations to develop programs and networking opportunities that highlight the importance of people-to-people relationships and give the Council's national network of Japanese American leaders the ability to contribute their unique perspectives.

For more information about USJC, please visit: www.usjapanCouncil.org.