

Kansai Seminar Speech by Senior Consul Tomoko Dodo, August 20, 2013

It is an honor and pleasure to join such energetic participants from both sides of the Pacific Ocean, namely Kansai, known since ancient Japan for producing successful merchants and its vigorous economy, and Washington State with its diversity and innovative spirits.

Could someone tell me what is moving under our feet right at this moment? I will give you a hint. It is from Kansai and the biggest one of its kind. Yes, it is Bertha, proudly manufactured by Hitachi Zosen in Osaka, digging the Highway 99 tunnel. You may think this is a Japanese company profiting with its product. Yes, it is true, but look! Washington State is a beneficiary of this Kansai born technology, too. As Governor Inslee says, transportation is one of the key factors for assuring this region's economic vitality.

In the retail realm, Costco runs 17 stores in Japan including 3 in the Kansai region, and I hear that it is going to expand its operation to 55 stores in the near future. Well, you might say it is an American company making a profit. Yes, it is so, but look! As a global industry leader, Costco's practices of hiring almost all employees locally, even senior management, and actively recruiting women to serve in these positions, are benefiting Japan, too.

These are just two of the many examples of mutually beneficial business activities across the Pacific. Today, Governor Ido as well as business leaders from Greater Kansai, Chairman Sato of Osaka, Chairman Ohashi of Kobe and President Okuhara of Kyoto, will show us possibilities for new opportunities.

I must say 50 years ago the then Governor of Hyogo really had foresight by selecting one of the most attractive and forward looking states with so much potential as its sister state. Likewise the then Governor of Washington had foresight by partnering with Hyogo of Greater Kansai, such a dynamic region.

As witnessed and confirmed by both Governor Inslee and Governor Ido at the signing of the Joint Communiqué yesterday, we can look forward to expanding our multifaceted relations for the next 500 years.