

Ambassador ISTICIOAIA-BUDURA: WELCOME SPEECH at the EBC-CIC-DEL Co-hosted EPA Celebratory event	Wednesday 28/02/2018, 16:30-19:30 Tokyo, Europa House
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- Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen!
- It gives me an immense pleasure to welcome you all to Europa House to attend this celebratory event on the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, which the Delegation is hosting together with the European Business Council and with the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation.
- The conclusion of the EPA negotiations between the EU and Japan in December 2017 demonstrates the powerful political will of Japan and the EU to continue to keep the world economy working on the basis of free, open and fair markets with clear and transparent rules.
- The EU-Japan EPA is one of the largest and most comprehensive economic agreements that either the EU or Japan have concluded so far. This EPA will create a huge economic zone with 600 million people and approximately 30 percent of the world GDP covered, and it will open up tremendous trade opportunities and contribute to strengthening our economies and societies.
- We are confident that, once in place, this Agreement will deliver sustainable and inclusive economic growth and spur job creation, while at the same time confirming our commitment to the highest level of labour, safety, environmental and consumer protection standards and fully safeguarding public services.

- With the conclusion of the negotiations and with the legal review of the agreement finalised, we remain on track to submit the agreement to the EU's Member States and the European Parliament during this year and to have the Agreement enter into force next year before the end of the current mandate of the European Commission in 2019.
- At the same time, negotiations continue on investment protection standards and investment protection dispute resolution. The firm commitment on both sides is to reach convergence in the investment protection negotiations as soon as possible, in light of shared commitment to a stable and secure investment environment in Europe and Japan.
- I would like to take the opportunity to thank the European Business Council and its committees for their important contribution in making the negotiations a success. The current Chairman, the previous chairmen and the chairmen of the committees have made a valuable input into the negotiation process. I trust that our cooperation continues once we start implementing the agreement.
- Much work has been required from everyone in making the agreement come true and further work still remains to be done. But tonight we take a break and celebrate the achievement so far, and say 'Bravo – we did it!' to each other.
- Without further ado, I give the floor to the next speaker in the row of several and wish everyone a joyous celebration!
- I thank you for your attention.