

**Perth, Australia**  
**October 14, 2008**

## **46th Australia-Japan Joint Business Conference**

### **Joint Statement**

**by the**

**Japan-Australia Business Co-operation Committee (JABCC)**

**and the**

**Australia-Japan Business Co-operation Committee (AJBCC)**

Japan and Australia have advanced through a relationship focused on complementary economic ties, and in recent years the two countries have established a very close relationship in both the political and economic arenas as partners sharing common values. Against this backdrop, the JABCC and AJBCC have been active in their roles as organizations advancing private-sector economic exchanges between the two countries. The two organizations have been working to stress the need for a Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement including a Free Trade Agreement (EPA/FTA) since 2002, in hopes of further strengthening the bilateral economic ties.

In relation to this issue, Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd gave a speech affirming the importance of mutual relations between his country and Japan at a welcome dinner hosted by JABCC during his visit to Japan in June this year. Furthermore, at the 45th Japan-Australia Joint Business Conference held in 2007, Japan's then Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda delivered a special address expressing his wish to see further enhancement of the strong ties between the two countries. It is clear that we are now at a crucial stage in building a solid future relationship.

Meanwhile, the rising prices of resources and energy as well as food around the world threaten to become major roadblocks to global economic growth. It is also deeply regrettable that talks collapsed at the World Trade Organization's Doha Round ministerial meeting held this past July. There is no denying that this will substantially delay the move toward global trade liberalization and accelerate the conclusion of bilateral and regional free trade agreements (FTAs) as countries pursue ongoing economic development through free trade and investment.

The JABCC and AJBCC firmly believe that conclusion of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership (EPA)/Free Trade Agreement (FTA) currently under negotiation between the two governments is not only essential for the countries' futures, but that it will contribute greatly to the stability and economic growth of the East Asian region. We therefore urge both governments to intensify negotiations with an eye toward achieving a conclusion of the Japan-Australia EPA/FTA as rapidly as possible.