Opening Remarks by Chairman Shukuri

for the U.S. - Japan Maritime Symposium 2026

Good afternoon, everyone. I am Masafumi Shukuri, Chairman of the Japan Transport and Tourism Research Institute, or JTTRI, and Chairman of the Japan International Transport and Tourism Institute, USA, or JITTI USA.

First, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to all of you who are attending this symposium in person and online.

Second, I would like to extend my deep gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Shigeo Yamada, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the United States of America, for his presence in spite of his busy schedule.

Next, I would like to express my special thanks to the keynote speakers:

- Mr. Mark D. Johnson, Deputy Administrator of the Maritime Administration at the U.S. Department of Transportation, MARAD; and
- Mr. Hirohisa Tsuruta,

Vice-Minister for International Affairs at the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan.

Thank you very much for joining us today. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to Captain Carmel and the entire MARAD team for their generous support of this symposium.

Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Tamekia Flack for serving as our panel moderator, and to all eight panelists for joining us.

Amid an increasingly complex landscape, national security is rapidly expanding into the economic domain. Securing critical supply chains for essential industries and accelerating the development of cutting-edge technologies have become even more important. In response, the Japanese government is mobilizing both the public and private sectors to safeguard our nation through robust economic security measures.

Crucially, the maritime industry underpins this security. Yet, we have recently witnessed a wide range of risks—from geopolitical tensions to natural disasters. For Japan and the United States as maritime nations, these escalating risks directly threaten energy, food and other essential supplies, making safe and stable maritime transport more critical than ever.

Against this backdrop, two years ago, in October 2024, JITTI USA and JTTRI hosted our maritime symposium under the theme of “Sea Lane Safety and Supply Chain Resilience for Economic Security” at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C. We invited government officials and distinguished experts from Japan and the United States to engage in profound discussions, with a special focus on the challenges for shipping and sea lanes. I believe some of you with us today—whether in person or online—may have participated in that symposium as well.

During the highly fruitful discussions at that symposium, U.S. speakers expressed grave concern regarding the decline in U.S. shipbuilding capacity. Participants from both Japan and the United States also shared a clear recognition of the importance of securing reliable sea lanes and stable supply chains, and strengthening our maritime industrial bases, from the perspective of economic security. They also underscored the vital importance of a complementary partnership between our two countries.

Concurrently, that same month, we established a comprehensive research committee within JTTRI, comprising representatives from industry, government, and academia. Over a period of approximately one year and nine months, the committee took a holistic approach in our discussions covering shipping, ports, logistics, the maritime industry, regulatory and infrastructural frameworks, and international cooperation, from the perspective of economic security. Last July, we proudly presented a set of policy recommendations, titled “Strategic Securing of International Maritime Transport Networks Supporting the Japanese Economy”, to the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. The Minister responded with a strong commitment, stating that the government will proactively strengthen Japan's international maritime networks based on our proposals.

In addition, in December 2024, two months after the U.S.-Japan Maritime Symposium, the Japan Maritime Center, where I serve as Chairman, newly established a maritime industry committee, comprising representatives from industry, government, and academia. Our robust discussions centered on enhancing the competitiveness and economic security of the entire Japanese maritime industry with a special focus on international and domestic shipping, the shipbuilding and ship machinery industries, ports, and human resources in the maritime field. In March of this year, we presented a set of policy recommendations, titled “Recommendations for the revitalization of Japan’s maritime industry” to the Minister, strongly requesting that the government actively promote these initiatives.

In line with these developments, the Japanese government has designated shipbuilding as one of the strategic sectors under its Japan Growth Strategy and is promoting the expansion of shipbuilding capacity based on its Shipbuilding Industry Revitalization Roadmap. Moreover, to secure stable maritime transport, Japan is accelerating efforts toward the overall development of its maritime industry, based on the recognition that shipping and shipbuilding industries, as two complementary pillars, should be promoted on the same token.

Ten years have passed since “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” was first proposed by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The relevance of FOIP continues to grow as just demonstrated at the Japan-U.S. summit meeting last month where the two leaders concurred that they would strongly promote the vision. Furthermore, the Japanese government has proposed the “Updated FOIP”, emphasizing that it is essential for countries to acquire the capabilities to freely determine their own future and resilience across economic, social, and security domains, in order to realize FOIP in the uncertain international circumstances including intensifying geopolitical competition and accelerating technological innovation.

The strategic reinforcement of the maritime industrial bases in both Japan and the United States is indispensable to realizing FOIP. To respond to intensifying geopolitical competition and various societal needs—such as securing stable supply chains for critical goods and achieving decarbonization, we need to create new innovations through the introduction of creative technologies such as AI and robotics, and shape the future of an autonomous and resilient maritime industry in both Japan and the United States.

Here today, we are honored to have invited government officials and corporate leaders from both Japan and the United States. We hope to have lively discussions regarding the challenges and future direction that both the public and private sectors should jointly address, including perspectives on bilateral cooperation, such as the efforts based on the Memorandum of Cooperation on Shipbuilding signed in October 2025.

In closing, I sincerely hope that today's symposium will serve as a cornerstone for deepening cooperation between Japan and the United States in the maritime sector.

Thank you very much.

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