

Remarks by Ambassador Minoru Shibuya

at the Conferment of the Decoration on

Dr. Aäron Pais

Tuesday, 26 January 2010

Buitenrustweg 3, The Hague

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me as Ambassador of Japan in the Netherlands to confer upon Dr. Aäron Pais the **Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star**. This decoration is being awarded to Dr. Pais in recognition of his contributions to the promotion of mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and the Netherlands and his efforts towards facilitating academic exchanges through the Japan Prize Winners Programme which was carried out from 1995 until 2008.

Throughout his long and distinguished career, Dr. Pais has displayed a deep-rooted interest for education in **general**, language and teaching in **particular**. Before he entered politics on a national level as Minister of Education, Dr. Pais lectured political economics at the University of Amsterdam. After 5 years as a member of the city council of Amsterdam, and 4 years as a representative of the Provincial Government of North Holland, Dr. Pais was appointed Minister of Education in the famous-Van Agt/Wiegel Cabinet of 1977/ 1981. As I look around the room, I see a number of prominent figures who were his colleagues at the time.

As Minister of Education, Dr. Pais was responsible for the restructuring of the higher education system in the Netherlands as well as for revising old and implementing new legislation in the educational system of the Netherlands. As education minister his interest included such issues as emancipation, finance and the struggle to avoid budget cuts but also the preservation of the Frisian language. It is therefore not surprising that Dr. Pais was drawn to the Japan Prizewinners Programme. For over a decade he was chairman of this programme which was aimed at recruiting and training the best and brightest from university graduates across the country. Under this chairmanship the JPP flourished and more than 200 young Dutch professionals have profitted from the unique opportunity the JPP offered. On several occasions when it appeared that the JPP was to be terminated, Dr. Pais and his colleagues managed to convince the Dutch government that this programme was so unique that an exception to the ruling policy at the time should be made. Sadly, the group of graduates in 2008 was the last group which was awarded the JPP diplomas. The legacy however lives on in the many graduates.

Dr. Pais, for your great efforts to support the Japan Prizewinners Programme and your dedication to promoting academic exchanges between Japan and the Netherlands I offer you my government's heartfelt thanks.

Congratulations Dr. Pais.