

June 4, 2020

Statement on Re-entry Restrictions Placed on Permanent Residents and Visa Holders

The American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ) expresses our concerns regarding Japan's immigration policy as to the entry of foreign nationals residing in Japan during the COVID-19 crisis.

The ACCJ readily understands and supports Japan's efforts to protect itself from further spread of the virus in Japan, including Japan's decision to enforce a mandatory 14-day quarantine on those returning to Japan from countries abroad where the risk is greatest. We are concerned, however, that the prohibition currently in place on the entry into Japan of foreign nationals who have a permanent abode, family and work base in Japan is detrimental to Japan's long-term interests.

Such individuals, especially those with permanent residency (eijuken) and their accompanying family members or those who are immediate family members of Japanese nationals, and those with long-term working visas and their accompanying family members, need to be allowed to enter Japan under the same conditions as Japanese citizens to continue living and working. Such foreign nationals, who include essentially all of the ACCJ's 1500+ non-Japanese members are a vital part of effectively managing American businesses in Japan, and support families and both the Japanese and foreign communities in Japan.

We also note that through the payment of local and national taxes, the consumption of goods and services from the local economy, and the support for companies both local and international, Japan's foreign residents and workers play an important role in ensuring Japan's economic growth and good relations with global partners. Their contributions will be all the more important as Japan looks to recover from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. At minimum, Japan should adopt the approach of other G7

countries to allow foreigners with proper permanent residency and immediate family members to enter.

We also understand that there is consideration to allow the resumption of travel between Japan and other countries with proposed support of a traveler's Embassy in Japan, such as the U.S. Embassy issuing a note on behalf of each U.S. citizen who needs to travel, or as infections in those countries decline. From recent media reports, the resumption of travel appears to involve a tiered approach, starting with allowing essential travel, such as business travel, before allowing sightseeing and other non-essential trips. Whenever the Japanese government decides to allow this, we request that its provisions include not only Japanese nationals, but also foreign nationals with proper permanent residency as well as their spouses and children, foreign nationals who are spouses or children of Japanese nationals, long-term visa holders and their accompanying family members, and foreign nationals residing in Japan under Japanese working visas, and that Japan stress to other countries that such foreign residents should be accorded the same travel rights (as to health matters) as Japanese nationals.

For example, many ACCJ member companies have regional headquarters and production sites elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region, and those companies will be able to more fully contribute to Japan's recovery if all of their personnel are permitted to depart for and return from such designated countries in the same manner as Japanese nationals. While we understand that the situation is fluid, we encourage, that to the extent possible, the Japanese government announces clear timelines for the resumption of travel. We also recommend any such policy be implemented with the minimum documentation necessary between Japanese authorities and the individual travelers to validate status and health.

We respectfully request that the Japanese government considers these concerns and suggestions as critical work continues to protect Japan from the effects of the pandemic.