

Dr Simón, Director of CSDS,
Dr Pejsova, Senior Fellow of CSDS,
Distinguished guests,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to congratulate the VUB-CSDS, one of Europe's most influential think tanks, based in Brussels, the capital of Europe, on the establishment of the Japan Chair to promote understanding of Japanese politics and foreign policy, and on the appointment of Senior Fellow Pejsova as the Chair holder.

I would also like to congratulate the organisers on holding this launch event today overcoming the impact of the coronavirus disaster. I believe that the sound government policies come from diversified ideas and free discussions. To obtain public understanding and support for the relevant policies, it is also important to disseminate accurate information domestically and internationally. Moreover, I am convinced that the collaboration with influential think tanks is essential in advancing these efforts.

CSDS has been promoting concrete cooperation with Japan, such as through the "Japan Program" supported by the Japan Foundation. To further strengthen such efforts, the Japanese government has decided to contribute funds to establish the Japan Chair of CSDS. I am pleased we have been able to further strengthen our cooperation with CSDS.

Distinguished guests,

we are now at a turning point in history. I visited Brussels in April this year and attended the NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting for the first time as Japanese Foreign Minister.

The meeting was held against the backdrop of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Russia's aggression is an outrageous act that has shaken the very foundations of the free and open international order based on the rule of law. At the meeting, I stressed that the security of Europe and that of the Indo-Pacific cannot be separated, and emphasized that the time had arrived to strengthen cooperation between Japan and like-minded countries and partners. The cooperation between Japan and European countries as well as the EU and the NATO must be upgraded to a new level for the future.

In the Indo-Pacific region, unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion are continuing, including in the East and the South China Seas. In China, Xi Jinping has entered his third term, and the international community is closely watching how things evolve from now on. Furthermore, North Korea has been intensifying its nuclear and missile activities, which pose a growing security threat.

The post-Cold War international order is dynamically changing. It is extremely important for Europe and Japan to cooperate on the various issues. This is because we not only share the very fundamental values and interests but also have the will and the ability to tackle them.

The international situation as seen from Europe is not necessarily the same as that seen from Japan. Through examination of the situation from both the Japanese and European perspectives, we can clearly identify the challenges to be addressed and the approaches to be adopted. I believe this will help direct our efforts toward appropriate solutions.

In this regard, I hope that the Japan Chair of CSDS will conduct vigorous research and disseminate the resulting insights, even if they are sometimes not what we want to hear. I trust the Japan Chair, as a hub for Japanese Studies, will engage with the global political community about Japan's international contributions and the potential for cooperation between Japan and Europe.

At the same time, it will no doubt foster a large number of people with positive attitudes towards Japan together with brilliant scholars from all over the world.

Finally, I would like to conclude my remarks by asking for the continuous cooperation of the many people involved with CSDS, especially those who have joined us today in launching the Japan Chair.