

JOINT STATEMENT BETWEEN MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

H.E. Mr Motegi Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan and H.E. Mr Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia met in Riga on 2 July 2021 and issued the following statement.

Overview of relations

Japan and Latvia are like-minded partners, which share their strong support for fundamental values and principles of freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law and effective multilateralism. Both sides are looking forward to further strengthening of bilateral relations in political, economic, cultural and other fields.

This year marks 100 years of friendship between the two nations that goes back to 1921. Over these years, Japan and Latvia have built up strong diplomatic ties and active political dialogue on all levels. Both sides recalled the state visit of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan to Latvia in 2007, the visit of the Prime Minister of Latvia to Japan in 2017 and the visit of the Prime Minister of Japan to Latvia in 2018, as well as the visit of the President of Latvia to Japan in 2019. These visits displayed the excellent state of this long-lasting bilateral relationship and mutual understanding.

Political dialogue and cooperation

Japan and Latvia will work towards the strengthening of political cooperation by promoting regular meetings and dialogue. This includes enhancing friendly exchanges between the two governments and legislative bodies, as well as local authorities in various forms, and meetings on the margins of international and regional fora, as appropriate. Both sides will hold regular consultations on topics of mutual interest, including through the 3+1 Japan-Baltic Cooperation Dialogue.

Referring to the strategic partnership between Japan and the EU, both sides stressed the importance of Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement and the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which open opportunities to boost political and economic cooperation between Japan and Latvia. Based on the Japan-EU Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure, both sides acknowledged the need to promote sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based connectivity between Asia and Europe.

Japan and Latvia recognized the importance of Japan-EU Summit held on 27 May. The launch of Japan-EU Green Alliance will accelerate joint action to meet climate and environmental goals and opens opportunities for bilateral cooperation to this end. The Ministers also reiterated that they share views on various foreign policy issues, as

elaborated in the Japan-EU Joint Statement issued after the Japan-EU Summit held on 27 May.

The Ministers exchanged views on issues related to human rights and the rules-based international order. Building on the commonalities between our respective approaches to the region, Japan and Latvia will enhance cooperation for a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is inclusive and based on the rule of law and democratic values. Both sides also expressed willingness to explore opportunities to strengthen cooperation in development assistance to the countries of the EU's Eastern Partnership and Central Asia.

Japan and Latvia fully support the rules-based international system with the United Nations playing the central role in addressing global challenges. Both sides recognized the need to jointly tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences and to work together in contributing to the post-pandemic recovery. The Ministers expressed willingness to strengthen their dialogue and cooperation in multilateral and regional fora on the issues of mutual interest, including *inter alia* disarmament, non-proliferation, the fight against disinformation and UN reform.

The Ministers underlined the importance of the continuous dialogue between Asia and Europe, including in the framework of the Asia-Europe Meetings (ASEM). The Ministers emphasized the importance of Japan and NATO's close political dialogue, notably through the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme and the practical cooperation to address global security challenges, including cooperation with NATO StratCom COE.

Economic cooperation

Japan and Latvia recognized each other as reliable trade partners and welcomed growth in trade and investment, particularly in the transport and energy sectors, stressing the importance of the investments of Mitsui & Co., Ltd. in the Riga Universal Terminal and MM Capital Infrastructure Fund in JSC Conexus Baltic Grid.

The Ministers stressed the importance of the EPA in strengthening trade links between Japan and Latvia and encouraged businesses to utilize the agreement effectively. With the view of developing regional hubs, transit routes and distribution centres for cargoes linking European and Asian markets, the Ministers recognized the potential of expanding further cooperation in transport, including smart mobility, and logistics. In respect to the largest regional infrastructure project Rail Baltica, the Ministers encouraged businesses to use the opportunities for cooperation.

In addition, tourism, life sciences, ICT including artificial intelligence, medical technologies and virtual and augmented reality solutions for medical training and green technologies are areas where mutual collaboration can be further explored.

The Ministers recalled last year's successful cooperation between Japan and Latvia within the 5G Techritory Forum, where visions, approaches and best practices in 5G development and utilization were shared. Both sides shared the view to explore mutually beneficial cooperation taking place in this format.

Cultural and social cooperation

The Ministers recognized the importance of further strengthening the cultural links and people-to-people contacts, as well as cooperation in education between Japan and Latvia. The Ministers acknowledged the necessity of engaging the youth and shared the view to continue discussion on the Working Holiday Scheme Agreement, looking ahead to the normalization of cross-border travel. The Ministers expressed a commitment to promote bilateral exchanges in the field of sports and culture.

Both sides supported the holding of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 in a safe and secure manner this summer as a symbol of global unity in overcoming COVID-19 and are looking forward to the forthcoming Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan.

Concluding remarks

The Ministers expressed their shared determination to step up cooperation efforts across the political, economic and cultural areas, while looking forward to the next century of friendship between the two nations.