

D Europe

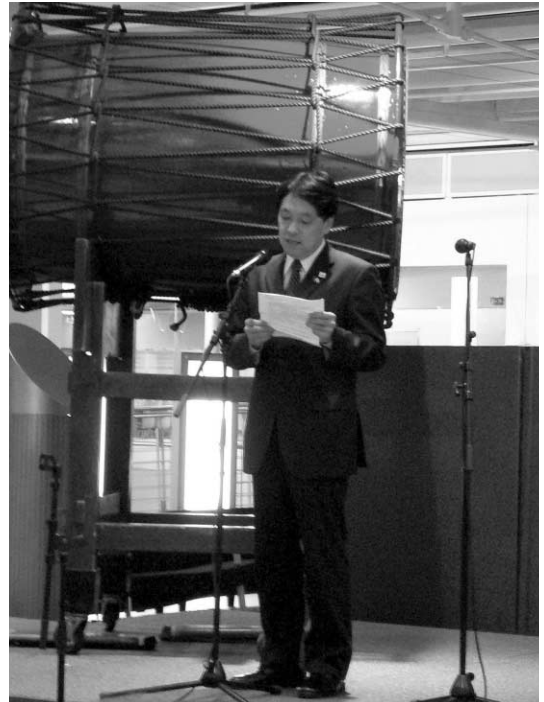
Overview

2005 was a year in which Europe faced difficulties. The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (TCE) was rejected in referendums held in France and the Netherlands, and the European Council failed to reach agreement in a meeting in June on a midterm financial perspective for the period of 2007-2013, which should have determined the budgetary framework for the newly enlarged 25-member European Union (EU), leading to concerns that the EU integration process was stagnating. However, in October it was decided to initiate accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia, and in December, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was granted status as a candidate for EU membership. This development gave new momentum to the enlargement process, and in December the European Council reached agreement on the new financial perspective.

Integration and enlargement are increasing the EU's influence in the international community, and the EU is an important partner for Japan, as both share basic values such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and face a variety of common international issues. Japan will continue to advance dialogue and cooperation with the EU, building even firmer relations.

To further bolster Japan-Europe relations and expand the breadth of Japan's diplomacy requires efforts to strengthen not only Japan-EU relations, but also bilateral relations with each European country. It is important for Japan to strengthen ties with the major countries of Europe, including United Nations (UN) Security Council permanent members the United Kingdom (UK) and France, and G8 counterparts Germany and Italy. In addition, it is also important for Japan to enhance close political and economic ties with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which are growing in economic importance, and the countries of Western Europe, with which Japan has already advanced cooperative relations within the international community, and thereby deepen people-to-people and cultural exchanges.

In 2005, the EU-Japan Year of People-to-People Exchanges was implemented with a view to further promoting people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and more than 1,900 events were held in a wide variety of



Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs Onodera makes a speech at the opening reception for the EU-Japan Year of People-to-People Exchanges (January 19, EU Headquarters, Belgium)

areas over the course of the year, including the political, economic, educational, science and technology, cultural, and sporting arenas.

(a) The Situation in the EU

(1) *Extension of the Ratification Period for the European Constitution*

The European Constitutional Treaty, commonly referred to as the European Constitution, was signed on October 29, 2004, and procedural measures started to be implemented for ratification by each country with a target deadline of November 2006. However, referendums were held in France (May 29) and the Netherlands (June 1) in which the ratification of the Constitution was rejected,¹ leading to the UK (June 6) freezing plans to hold its own referendum.

At the European Council held on June 16, the handling of the European Constitution was discussed

1. France: Votes for: 54.33%, votes against: 45.67%, voter turnout: 69.37%; Netherlands: Votes for: 38.4%, votes against: 61.6%, voter turnout: 62.8%

and the following was agreed: (1) the ratification process should continue; (2) the ratification deadline of November 2006 should be extended (although no new deadline was set); (3) further consultations would take place under the Austrian presidency of the EU (first half of 2006); (4) there would be no renegotiation of the TCE; and (5) the timing for ratification of the TCE would be left to the discretion of each country.

After this agreement, Denmark, Czech Republic, Ireland, and Portugal postponed the implementation of a referendum on the issue, although Luxembourg went ahead as originally scheduled with its referendum (July 10), and ratified the TCE. As of December 2005, 13 countries had ratified the Constitution (Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia, Greece, Slovakia, Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria, Latvia, Cyprus, Malta, and Luxembourg).

(2) Enlargement

Following the fifth enlargement of the EU in May 2004,² moves were seen in 2005 toward further enlargement. Bulgaria and Romania each signed an Accession Treaty in April, and with a target date of January 2007 set for enactment of these treaties and membership of the EU, procedures are currently underway in each country toward ratification. With regard to Turkey's accession, in June the European Commission submitted a draft framework for accession negotiations to the member states,³ and as a result of various discussions, on October 3, a meeting of the Council of the European Union on General Affairs and External Relations approved the framework for negotiations, and it was decided to initiate negotiations. At the same meeting it was decided to initiate negotiations on accession with Croatia, and in December it was decided by the European Council to grant the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia candidate status for accession.

(3) EU Financial Perspective

In the EU, separate from annual budgets is a multi-annual financial perspective which sets out maximum budgetary expenditure for each budgetary item. The

current financial framework is known as "Agenda 2000" (running from 2000 to 2006).⁴

In the European Council meeting in June, although consultations took place concerning the financial perspective for 2007 through 2013 (the first such perspective for the newly enlarged, 25-member EU), debates revolved around such issues as total appropriations for payments and the "UK rebate,"⁵ resulting in differences of opinion among members that ultimately stymied agreement. In the European Council meeting of December, the total amount of the 2007-2013 financial perspective was set at 862.3 billion euro, on the basis of Bulgaria and Romania's accession in 2007, which represents a burden of 1.045% of GNI for each member. In addition it was agreed that for the period 2007 to 2013 the UK rebate would be reduced by a maximum of 10.5 billion euro, and that from 2008 to 2009, the European Commission would engage in a review of EU expenditure and finances, including the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the UK rebate, and would report on the results.

(4) Economic Situation

From the second half of 2005, given the euro's weakness against the dollar, exports increased and there was a recovery in capital investment, leading to moderate recovery in the European economy. However, given the low rate of growth that persisted from the second half of 2004 to the first half of 2005, GDP growth in 2005 was expected to remain at 1.3% over the preceding year in the Eurozone, and 1.5% in the 25 EU member states. In addition, the unemployment rate in the Eurozone rose to 8.9% in 2004, and is expected to drop to 8.6%, which is still at a high level (the rate for 25 EU member states is forecast at 8.7%).

While the underlying recovery trend remained in the Eurozone, in December 2005, the European Central Bank (ECB) announced its key interest rate rise of 0.25% to 2.25%, the first hike since June 2003, as a means of adjusting its monetary easing policies, in consideration of upward risk on mid- to long-term price stability such as influences of the high price of petroleum on consumer

2. On May 1, 2004, ten countries newly joined the EU: Estonia, Cyprus, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Malta, Latvia and Lithuania.

3. This document incorporated principles and procedures for accession negotiations.

4. With an eye to the enlargement of the EU Agenda 2000 aims to improve efficiency in the EU budgetary framework as a whole, and in particular, improve efficiency in the agricultural and structural policy sectors. Following the enlargement of the EU in 2004, the ceiling on budgetary expenditure laid out in Agenda 2000 (1.24% of GNI for each country) still remains in effect.

5. Since a decision by the European Council in 1984, the UK has been receiving a rebate from its contributions to the EU. This is because in comparison to other member states, the amount the UK receives in subsidies through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and others is relatively small as a proportion of its contribution to EU finances, making its net contributions burden excessive. However, given (i) changes in the EU budgetary structure (reduction in proportion of agricultural budget), (ii) expansion of other countries' net contribution burden, and (iii) enlargement of the EU, it was necessary for consideration to be given to measures to adjust the rebate.

prices. On the other hand, in the UK, where household spending took a marked downturn in 2005 as a result of its interest rate hikes implemented from mid-2003 to 2004, in August 2005, its interest rate was reduced by 0.25% to 4.5%.

Under the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), the Eurozone member states are obliged to comply with budgetary discipline, such as keeping government deficits within 3% of GDP. However, the government deficits of many member states, including Germany, France, Italy and Portugal have been exceeding 3% of GDP. Given this situation, the SGP was revised in March in order to strengthen measures to prevent excessive government deficits and to provide flexibility in implementing the SGP.

The euro's exchange rate against the dollar has been on a downward trend from the beginning of the year 2005, due to the factors including difference in growth rates between the Eurozone and the United States (US) and differences in interest rates. This downturn improved the competitiveness of Eurozone exports. All of the 10 new member states that newly joined the EU in May 2004 are generally keen on early introduction of the euro, and with the exception of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, seven of the new members have already participated in the Exchange Rate Mechanism II (ERM II),⁶ which is one of the criteria for joining the euro. It is therefore expected that the introduction of the euro for member states having fulfilled all criteria could begin as early as 2007.

(b) Japan-EU Relations

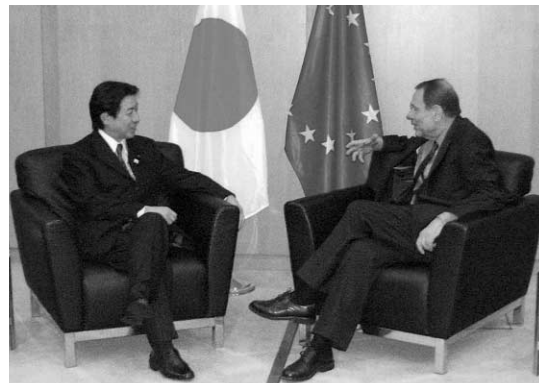
During 2005, political dialogue was advanced on all levels between Japan and the EU on common issues faced in the international community.

In May, the 14th Japan-EU Summit was held in Luxembourg; it was attended by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker of Luxembourg, the EU presidency during the first half of 2005, and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso. Prime Minister Koizumi conveyed Japan's opposition to the lifting of the EU's arms embargo on China. In this regard, summit leaders stressed that strategic dialogue should be enhanced in

order to share common recognition between Japan and the EU concerning security environment in East Asia. In addition, discussions took place on international situation, including overall relations between Japan and the EU, regional issues including China, the Korean Peninsula, Iran, Iraq, the Middle East peace, and Afghanistan, as well as international affairs such as energy and the environment. In addition, given the opportunity provided by the 2005 EU-Japan Year of People-to-People Exchanges, consensus was reached at the summit to promote exchanges between people.

The Japan-EU Troika Foreign Ministers' Meeting⁷ was held in May on the occasion of the 7th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM7) in Kyoto, and in September at the time of the UN General Assembly. At these meetings, a broad range of opinions was exchanged on Japan-EU relations, reform of the UN, counter-terrorism measures, and regional issues, including the Middle East, Myanmar, Iran, China, Afghanistan, and the Western Balkans.

Furthermore, the Japanese government promoted cooperation with the business sectors of both Japan and the EU in the EU-Japan Business Dialogue Round Table (BDRT) held in July 2005. Japan also worked to promote the interests of Japanese companies operating in the EU member states, and improved bilateral trade and investment as well as the business environment through various dialogs such as the Japan-EU Regulatory Reform Dialogue held in March and November 2005.



High Representative for the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Solana in talks with Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Shiozaki (December 7, Brussels, Belgium)

6. A system requiring member states' currency to remain within a $\pm 15\%$ band against the euro for two years.

7. The meeting in May was attended by Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura from the Japan side, with Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration of Luxembourg Jean Asselborn, European Commissioner in charge of External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and British Ambassador to Japan Sir Graham Fry (country holding the EU presidency in the latter half of 2005) attending among others from the EU side. In September, Foreign Minister Machimura attended the meeting with British Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Jack Straw, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria Ursula Plassnik (country holding the EU presidency in the first half of 2006), High Representative for the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Javier Solana, and European Commissioner in charge of External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Ferrero-Waldner.

Current Situation and Future of EU Enlargement



- EU15**
France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, UK, Ireland, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Sweden, Finland
- Members that acceded on May 1, 2004 (10 countries)**
Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Malta
- Countries scheduled to accede to the EU in 2007 (2 countries)**
Bulgaria, Romania
- Candidate countries for the EU (3 countries)**
Croatia, Turkey, Macedonia

Croatia and Turkey initiated accession negotiations in October 2005. Macedonia became a candidate country for the EU in December 2005.

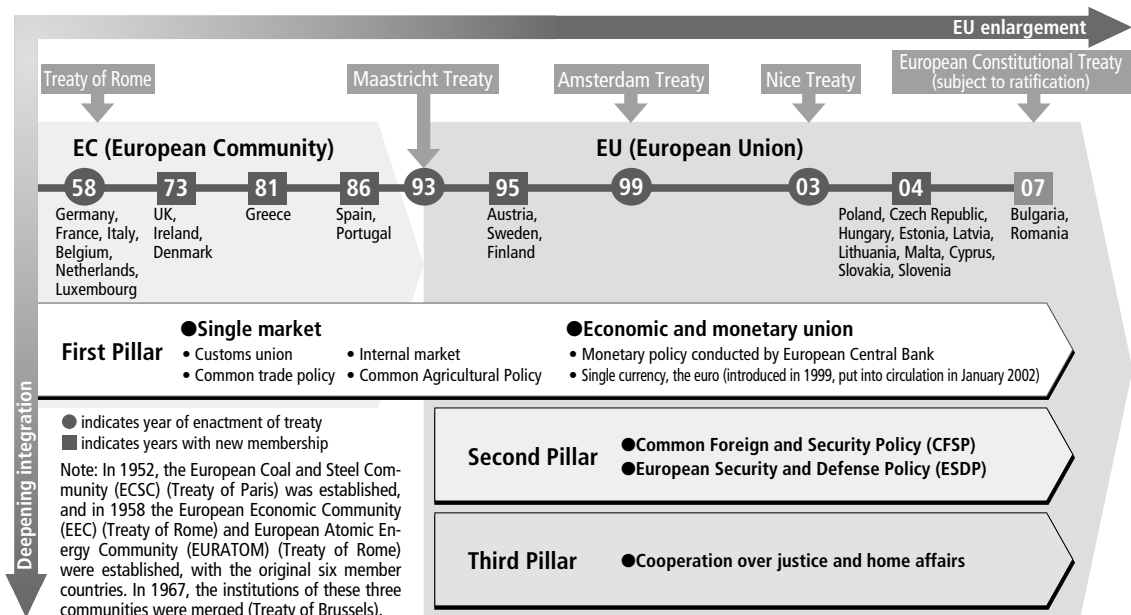
| | Population (2004) | GDP (2004) |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| EU25 | 455.30 mil. | US\$12.7 trillion |
| Japan | 127.76 mil. | US\$ 4.7 trillion |
| US | 293.51 mil. | US\$11.7 trillion |

Source: (GDP) IMF World Economic Outlook Database.
(Population) World Bank World Development Indicators.

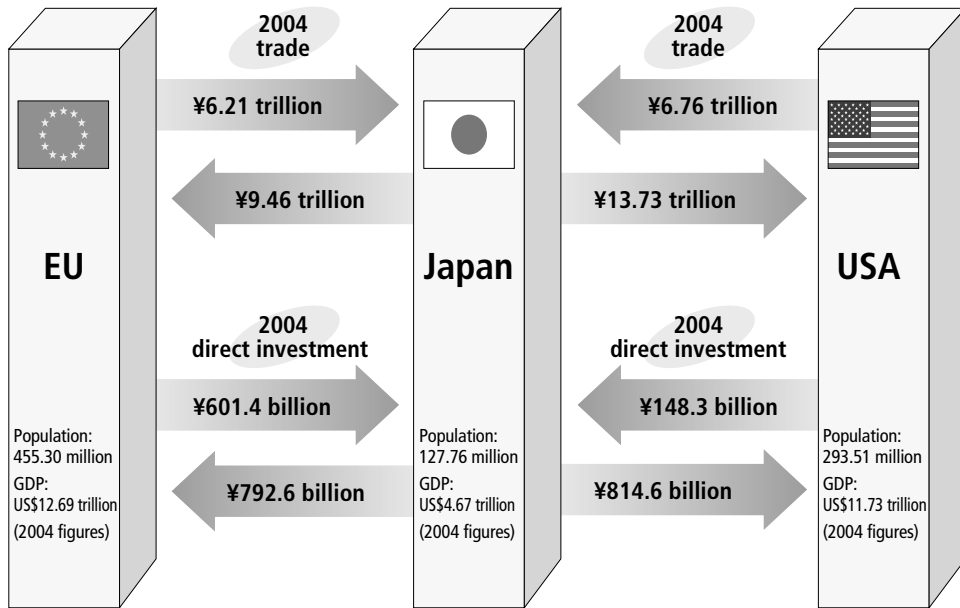
Copenhagen Criteria on Accession to the EU

1. Political criteria: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities
2. Economic criteria: existence of a functioning market economy
3. Acceptance of the laws of the EU

EU Integration and Enlargement



Comparison of Japan-EU and Japan-US Relations



References: Compiled from statistics from *Trade Statistics* (Ministry of Finance), *Balance of Payments Statistics* (Bank of Japan), the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

Note: Direct investment shows net flow.

(c) Situation in Major European Countries and Japanese Diplomacy

On July 7, as the G8 Summit was being held at Gleneagles, in the northern part of the UK, a series of terrorist bombs exploded targeting the underground and buses of London, claiming the lives of more than 50 people and injuring about 700. This was the second large-scale terrorist attack in Europe, following the bombing of trains in Madrid in March 2004, and this, coupled with the fact that the suspects were British served to shock the public both in the UK and elsewhere. The G8 leaders, including Prime Minister Koizumi who was in the UK attending the G8 Summit, issued a joint statement denouncing the attacks and pledging not to yield to terrorism.

In the UK, a general election took place on May 5. Although the ruling Labour Party sustained some losses, it maintained its overall majority in the House of Commons, and the Blair administration was returned for the third consecutive term. Prime Minister Blair's robust response to the July terrorist attacks saw his approval ratings rise, but subsequently some members of his own party opposed the Terrorism Bill, leading to its initial rejection in the House of Commons. Therefore, how the Blair administration will continue to manage governmental affairs is drawn to attention. In December, the

opposition Conservative Party appointed a new leader—39-year old David Cameron—and the party is on a recovery track. As the G8 Presidency, the UK led the Gleneagles Summit to a positive outcome and as the EU Presidency for the latter half of 2005, the UK devoted herself to forming an agreement among EU members on the midterm financial perspective for 2007-2013.

In France, with the rejection of the ratification of European Constitutional Treaty in a referendum in May, the cabinet of Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin (a center-right coalition) crumbled, and a new cabinet was formed under Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin. Prime Minister de Villepin is setting about policy management placing priority on employment issues. In response to the chain of destructive violence that took place in the suburbs of a number of large cities, including Paris, in November, the de Villepin cabinet gained support from the populace for its decisive efforts in quelling these illegal acts, yet at the same time it announced a series of measures, including employment measures targeting the younger generation, designed to help poverty-stricken areas.

In Germany, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder advanced domestic reforms, but with the number of the unemployed reaching postwar highs (5.21 million persons) at the dawn of 2005, his Social Democratic Party

(SPD) sustained large losses in State elections held in May. Given this result, Chancellor Schröder proposed the date for the federal election be brought forward, and the election took place in September. The election resulted in the SPD losing by a tiny margin to the Christlich-Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union) (CDU)/Christlich-Soziale Union (Christian Social Union)(CSU), and in November a grand coalition comprising members from both political groupings was inaugurated under the leadership of the CDU party leader Angela Merkel, who was appointed Chancellor. The new administration undertook the continuation of priority on unemployment measures and fiscal rebuilding in the domestic arena, while in the area of diplomacy seeking to improve relations with the US, which had been tense over the use of force in Iraq.

In Italy, in the face of the crushing defeat dealt to his coalition party in the April regional elections, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi submitted his resignation to President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. However, he was redesignated as prime minister, forming the third Berlusconi cabinet. The political situation is becoming increasingly enlivened as the general election, scheduled for Spring 2006, draws near.

In November, the first ever meeting of the Community for Democratic Choice (CDC), which includes pro-Western former Soviet republics such as Ukraine and Georgia, and other nearby countries such as Romania and Lithuania, and aims to promote regional democratization, was held in Kyiv in Ukraine. In December, Russia requested large price increases on the natural gas it supplies to Ukraine and negotiations between the two countries were broken off. However, negotiations resumed the following month, partially due to concerns of European countries which purchase natural gas via Ukraine.

In the Vatican, His Holiness Pope John Paul II passed away at the age of 84 on April 2. He was succeeded by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (78 years old, born in Germany) who became Pope Benedict XVI, the 265th Pope.

2005 was a year that saw changes in political administration in many countries. President Viktor Yushchenko was inaugurated in Ukraine, where he had called for democratization under the banner of the so-called "Orange Revolution," and in Poland President Lech Kaczyński was inaugurated. General elections took place in Denmark, Portugal, Andorra, Bulgaria, Albania, Norway and Poland, with resulting changes of administration in Portugal, Norway and Poland. In addition, the political administration changed in Estonia also, and in

Bulgaria a socialist coalition cabinet was formed. In Monaco, with the passing of His Serene Highness Rainier III, His Serene Highness Albert II acceded to the throne.

Through visits of VIPs and consultations, Japan has advanced not only bilateral relations with European countries but also closely cooperated with them over such international issues as UN reform, reconstruction of Iraq and nuclear development in Iran. On the occasion of the visit to Japan by President Jacques Chirac of France in March, a Summit meeting was held with Prime Minister Koizumi and the Declaration for a New Japan-France Partnership for Peace, Stability and Prosperity in the International Community was announced, and in this way efforts are being made to further enhance Japan-France relations. In relations with Germany, in addition to the visit to Japan of President Horst Köhler of Germany in April, on the occasion of the start of Germany in Japan 2005/2006, and the Summit meeting between Prime Minister Koizumi and Chancellor Schröder held in Moscow in May, various efforts have been made to promote Japan-Germany cooperation in the international community, including the close cooperation between the foreign ministers of each country as partners in the G4 group, which jointly aims for reform of the UN and the UN Security Council. In July, on the occasion of the visit to Japan of President Yushchenko of Ukraine, a Joint Statement on a New Partnership in the 21st Century was announced, which confirmed Japan's intention to support the consolidation of democracy in Ukraine.

In relations between the Imperial Family and the royal houses of Europe, in May, Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress made a state visit to Norway, and made an official visit to Ireland on the way to Norway. Also, Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Regent Haakon of Norway, Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary of Denmark, His Royal Highness The Duke of York (Prince Andrew) of the UK, and Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Willem-Alexander and Crown Princess Maxima of the Netherlands visited Japan in April, and in June there were visits to Japan by Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Asturias of Spain and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Philippe of Belgium. From Japan, in January Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Akishino visited Luxembourg, in April Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Hitachi visited Monaco, in June Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado visited Germany and Jordan, in July His Imperial Highness Prince Katsura visited France, and in

November Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado visited the UK.

With regard to the Western Balkans, where ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia took place, although there are still some regions in which reconciliation between ethnic groups has not progressed, on the whole the region has stabilized and is continuing on a track toward democratization, with each country steadily advancing the process of integration in Europe. Croatia, which has cooperated with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) initiated negotiations on EU accession in October, and in December, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was granted status as a candidate for EU accession, in recognition of the progress that has been made in a variety of reforms. Bosnia and Herzegovina, which marked the 10th anniversary of the end of the conflict there, is also steadily moving from the stage of post-conflict reconstruction to a stage of development toward integration with Europe. On the other hand, in Kosovo, where ethnic tensions persist, international momentum picked up on the initiation of negotiations on its future status, and in October the declaration by the President of the UN Security Council was adopted concerning the start of such negotiations. The negotiation process began in November, headed by former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari, who was appointed as special envoy of the Secretary-General of the UN for Future Status Process for Kosovo.⁸ As follow up to the Ministerial Conference on Peace Consolidation and Economic Development of the Western Balkans, which Japan co-hosted with the EU presidency in April 2004 in Tokyo, through cooperation and joint hosting of symposia held in the region on ethnic reconciliation and workshops on tourism promotion, Japan made efforts to assist the consolidation of peace and economic development of the Western Balkans.

(d) NATO and Other Regional Institutions

(1) *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*

In August 2003, NATO took over formal command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan as its first mission outside Euro Atlantic area under a non-Article 5 obligation.⁹ Since then, NATO has been actively engaged in operations prioritizing the maintenance of public security in Afghanistan, and has been making efforts to expand its operations westward and southward.

At the NATO Summit in February, leaders affirmed that assistance for the training of Iraqi security forces by NATO would continue, for which a request had been received from the Iraqi Interim Government, and that NATO would contribute to the political process in Kosovo.

In April, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer visited Japan and in talks with Prime Minister Koizumi and Foreign Minister Machimura both sides affirmed the importance of strengthening Japan-NATO relations. In December, Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yasuhisa Shiozaki visited NATO headquarters, and exchanged views with Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer on strengthening the Japan-NATO relationship and others.

(2) *Other Regional Institutions*

Besides the EU and NATO, Europe also has other regional institutions including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)¹⁰ in the field of security and the Council of Europe (CE)¹¹ in the field of human rights and justice, both of which have also been functioning actively.

In its relations with the OSCE, as a Partner for Co-operation Japan has made personnel contributions through participating in various consultations, dispatching officials on missions to Kosovo and other

8. Kosovo was a semi autonomous province of Serbia and Montenegro, but since the conflict in 1999 it has been under the administration of the United Nations Interim Administrative Mission.

9. In the New Strategic Concept adopted at the 1999 Washington Summit, NATO put forward its policy of maintaining Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (collective defense) as a basic obligation, while fulfilling a greater role in acting as a European security organization for the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic region. Activities outside of Article 5 are regarded as non-Article 5 obligations.

10. The OSCE is a regional organization made up of 55 countries, comprising the US, Canada, and countries stretching from Europe to Central Asia. The special features of the OSCE are: (1) during the Cold War it included both Western and Eastern bloc countries in Europe and contributed to easing tensions by providing a platform for East-West dialogue; and (2) particularly since the end of the Cold War it has carried out activities based on preventive diplomacy (including early warnings to parties involved in conflict and fact-finding) in comprehensive areas such as military and political, economic, and democratic and human rights areas. OSCE also has a high degree of reliability as evident in its activities outside the region in the area of election observation.

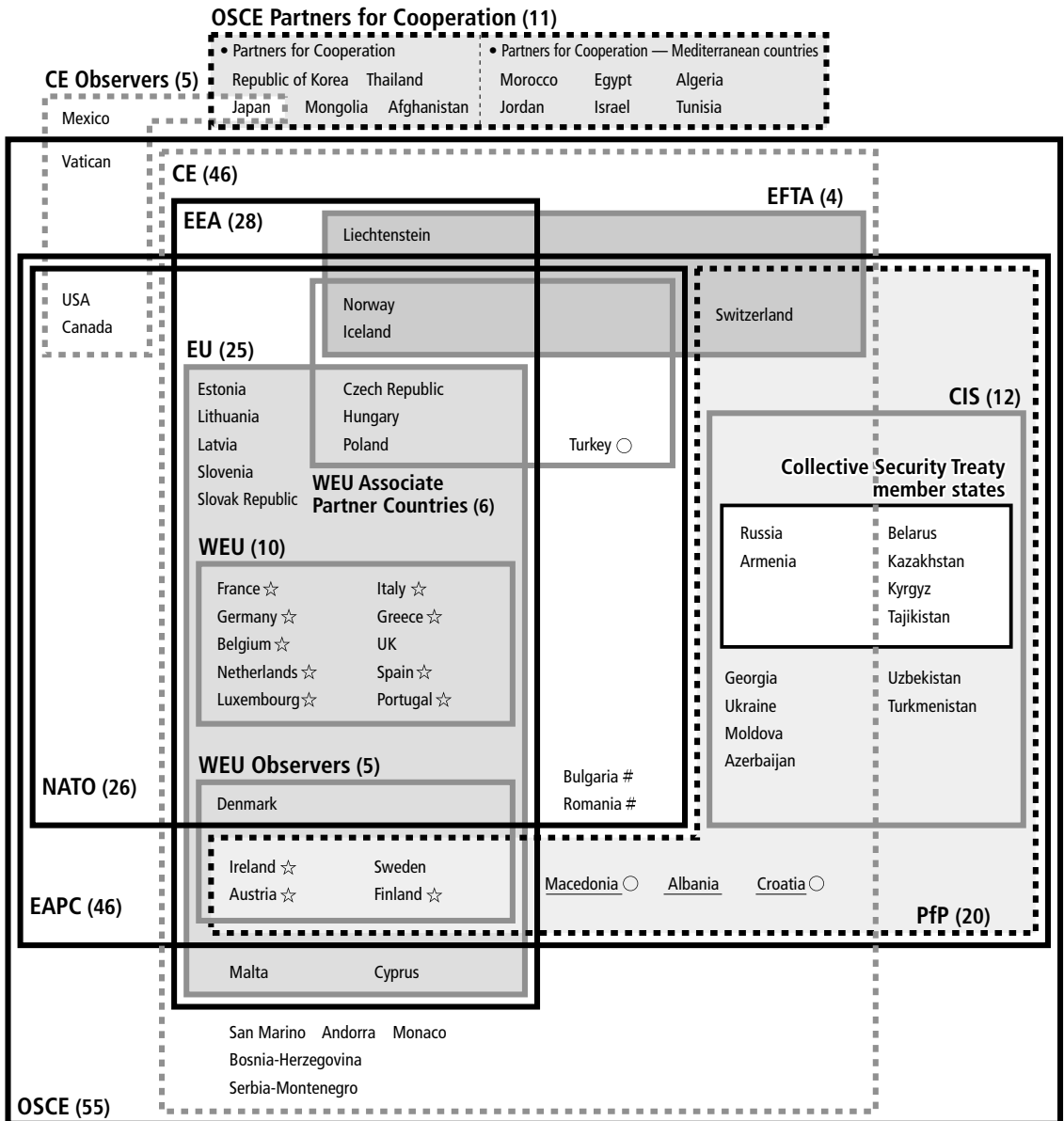
11. The Council of Europe is an international organization established in 1949 in Strasbourg, France, by 10 Western European countries sharing the common values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Its aim is to expand cooperation among the member countries in order to realize these values. Currently there are now 46 member countries. Japan was granted observer status of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in 1996.

places, and dispatching election observers to Eastern European and Central Asian countries. Japan has also made financial contributions, such as shouldering election expenses. In 2005, Japan dispatched personnel to teams of OSCE election observers in Kyrgyz, Moldova, and Kazakhstan, among others. In April, Japan participated in the OSCE-Korea Conference on New Security Threats and a New Security Paradigm held in the Republic of Korea (ROK) and co-organized by the OSCE and the ROK. In December, Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Shiozaki attended the OSCE Ministerial Council held in Slovenia, where he emphasized the importance of cooperation between Japan and the OSCE, and explained the necessity to foster common understanding between Europe and Asia in terms of the security environment of each region, and Japan's interest in and contribution to Central Asia, Western Balkans

and Afghanistan, which are all areas of mutual interest to Japan and Europe.

In its relations with the CE, as the only observer country of the Committee of Ministers from Asia, Japan has participated in meetings on a variety of issues, such as human rights, judicial affairs, and culture. Japan also has dispatched observers to CE election observation missions (i.e., Kosovo Assembly elections in October 2004). In May 2005, the Third Summit of the Council of Europe was held in Warsaw, Poland. At the summit, a message from Prime Minister Koizumi praised the activities of the CE to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and its efforts in the areas dealing with cyber crime and intercultural dialogue, announcing that Japan would work for even closer cooperation with the CE in the future.

Major International Frameworks in Europe



<Key>
 # : Accessing countries for the EU (2)
 ○ : Candidate countries for the EU (3)
 ☆ : Eurozone countries (12)
 — : Country participating in Membership Action Plan (MAP) of NATO (3)

Figures in parenthesis are number of participating countries

Glossary:
 CE (Council of Europe) (46)
 CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) (12)
 EAPC (Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) (46)
 EEA (European Economic Area) (28)
 EFTA (European Free Trade Association) (4)
 EU (European Union) (25)
 NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) (26)
 NRC (NATO-Russia Council) (27)
 OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) (Japan is a partner for cooperation) (55)
 PFP (Partnership for Peace) (20)
 WEU (Western European Union) (10)

Japan and Bulgaria Join in the Sumo Ring

Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Aso is standing before me... On February 8, 2006, the Government of Japan extended grassroots cultural grant aid to the Bulgarian Sumo Federation to meet the costs of setting up a dohyo ring and tatami mats, and I received the inventory on behalf of the Federation. More than three years have passed since I first stood in the dohyo ring as a sumo wrestler. At one time, it seemed that Japan knew little about Bulgaria other than its yoghurt; the mere appearance of a Bulgarian-born sumo wrestler on the scene attracted the attention of Japanese. I had never dreamed that I would now be introduced to Minister for Foreign Affairs Aso by His Excellency, Bulgarian Ambassador to Tokyo, Blagovest Sendov with the words, "Kotooshu is the first ranked Bulgarian ambassador to Japan," but if my existence makes people feel closer to Bulgaria, that makes me very happy, and I consider it a great honor.

Quite a few Bulgarians are interested in Japanese culture, and many people learn judo, aikido, and karate from childhood. Until recently, sumo was not well known in Bulgaria; however, the Bulgarian Sumo Federation was established in 1995, and since activities have been carried out to introduce and popularize sumo, interest has been growing. I first encountered



Kotooshu receiving inventory for grassroots cultural grant aid from Minister for Foreign Affairs Aso (February 2006)

sumo through this Federation, and my victory in a German tournament brought me to Japan, where, as a result of the lessons I got everyday under the strict guidance of my stablemaster (former Sadogatake and former yokozuna [grandmaster] Kotozakura), I became the first European-born sumo wrestler ever to be promoted to ozeki status in the New Year Grand Sumo Tournament of Japan in 2006.

Has my success had any effects? Currently, the number of sumo wrestlers born in Central and Eastern Europe is increasing. Russia, Estonia, Georgia, the Czech Republic, Hungary... wrestlers from many different countries have started putting on the loin-cloth, and sumo has been getting popular in Europe. From Minister for Foreign Affairs Aso, I received the words, "Sport is becoming international. Thank you for coming to the world of sumo." If I can become a bridge between Japan and Bulgaria and between Japan and Europe, that is a real honor for me. I feel strongly that with my being promoted to ozeki status, my responsibilities have grown greater. I will continue to study the "path" of sumo with all my might, for you all. I hope for all your support in the future.

(Kotooshu, Ozeki, Sadogatake Stable)

