

Section 5

Europe

1 Overview

<The Importance of Cooperation with Europe, with which Japan Shares Fundamental Values and Principles>

The European Union (EU) and European countries are important partners for Japan, and share fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Amidst the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), cooperation with the EU and European countries is necessary to respond to the challenges faced by the international community and to realize fundamental values in the international community.

European countries pursue common policies across a wide range of fields such as diplomacy and security, economy, and state finance, through various frameworks including the EU. They also play an important role in formulating standards in the international community. The countries also influence international opinion benefiting from their language, history, cultural and artistic activities, and through communication activities utilizing major media organizations and think tanks. Cooperation with Europe is important in enhancing Japan's presence and influence in the international community.

<Response to COVID-19 in Europe>

Even in 2021, European countries continued to

be compelled to take strict measures dramatically, including the lockdown across England following the confirmation of a new COVID-19 variant (the Alpha variant) in the UK in December 2020. The tendency of tight restrictions continued through the spring all over Europe, including the implementation of a nationwide lockdown in France in April. However, as vaccinations progressed in various countries before the summer vacation season, restrictions began to be relaxed to achieve a balance between COVID-19 countermeasures and socioeconomic activities, including the reopening of restaurants and entertainment facilities and the resumption of classes at schools. Although the number of infections began to increase again in various countries after June due to the spread of the Delta variant and the relaxation of restrictions, the number of severe cases and deaths remained relatively low. Amidst this, ahead of other countries, the UK introduced a “living with COVID-19” policy in which it eliminated most restrictions, including large-scale sporting events being held in June and July that attracted tens of thousands of spectators.

In July beginning with the operation of the “EU Digital COVID Certificate” in the EU, resumption of socioeconomic activities has been progressing since the summer through active implementation of vaccination certificates. In many EU member-states, certificates must be presented in order to use stores, facilities, and transportation systems.

In August, the European Commission announced that it had achieved its goal of vaccinating 70% of the adult population of the EU and appealed to continue recommending vaccinations to unvaccinated people, support for low- and middle-income countries to close the vaccination gap, and the need for international cooperation.

Thereafter, the overall tendency toward relaxation of restrictions continued until mid-November. However, the emergence of the Omicron variant later that month prompted countries to once again tighten quarantine measures and domestic restrictions. In December, as the outbreak of the variant continued to spread throughout Europe, the trend toward tighter restrictions continued, including mandatory wearing of masks and restrictions to enter entertainment facilities.

<Relations with Countries and Regions Outside Europe>

In regard to relations with China, there were activities to manage relations with China, including online summit meetings with the leaders of France, Germany, and China in April and July, as well as online summit meetings with President Xi Jinping held four times by Germany, twice by France, and once by Italy. There were also moves toward cooperation on global challenges such as climate change, including the holding of the EU-China High Level Environment and Climate Dialogue. On the other hand, Europe's sense of vigilance toward China has been growing, with especially high interest regarding the situation in Hong Kong and the human rights situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, as well as the situations concerning the South China Sea and Taiwan. Concerns about China are growing, as seen by the EU Foreign Affairs Council's decision to impose sanctions on China for large-scale arbitrary detentions in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, the release of the Joint Communication on the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in September, and the adoption of the resolution on a new EU-China

Strategy in the European Parliament. Furthermore, concern is growing in Europe about economic coercion and disinformation. In December, the European Commission released a proposed regulation on anti-coercive measures against economic coercion by third countries against the EU and its member states. In regard to relations with the United States, U.S. President Biden visited Europe in June, and it was indicated that there would be cooperation in a wide range of fields, including COVID-19, climate change, and trade and investment. At the NATO Summit held during the same period, a Communiqué issued at the meeting announced the enhancement of political dialogue and practical cooperation with partner countries in the Asia-Pacific, including Japan.

Relations with Russia continued to be a priority issue for Europe, but following Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 and Europe's reaction of strong condemnation and economic sanctions, the confrontation is intensifying between the two.

<Multilayered, Attentive Diplomacy with Europe>

In Europe, while the spread of COVID-19 has raised awareness of the importance of fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, and human rights, there have been in fact differences in the views of member countries on matters such as the recovery instrument, the rule of law, and relations with countries outside the region. Amidst this, Japan supports a strongly united Europe and conducts multilayered, attentive diplomacy with them. In 2021, despite major limitations on in-person visits by dignitaries due to COVID-19, diplomacy using teleconference meetings and telephone calls was actively developed.

In addition, taking the opportunity of in-person attendance at the G7 Cornwall Summit (June) and the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meetings (May and December) held under the Presidency of the UK, and the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (June) held under the Presidency of Italy, Japan held summit meetings

and foreign ministers' meetings with the UK, France, Germany, and other countries to confirm realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) as well as cooperation on global challenges such as climate change and responding to COVID-19. In addition, security and defense cooperation with European countries in particular was deepened in 2021. The Japan-UK Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting ("2+2") and the first Japan-Germany "2+2" were held online respectively in February and April. Moreover, the UK, French, Dutch, and German vessels were dispatched to the Indo-Pacific, and port calls to Japan, joint exercise, and other activities were implemented.

In the context of Japan-EU relations, close cooperation is conducted based on the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) which entered into force in February 2019, the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) of which the provisional application started at the same time, the Japan-EU Partnership on Connectivity signed in September 2019, and the Japan-EU Green Alliance established in May 2021. In the same month, Prime Minister Suga held the Japan-EU Summit (online) with President Michel of the European Council and President von der Leyen of the European Commission. They confirmed cooperation in addressing global challenges and further developing Japan-EU relations, including strengthening cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and COVID-19 countermeasures. Concerning relations with NATO, specific cooperation has been advanced in cyber and other fields based on the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme Between Japan and NATO, which was updated in 2020. In addition, in order to promote cooperation in areas such as women, peace, and security (WPS), a fourth female Self-Defense Force (SDF) personnel member has been dispatched to NATO Headquarters since December 2021.

Regarding the regions of the Visegrad Group (V4),¹ the Baltic States, and the Western Balkans, multilayered diplomacy was implemented with promotion of cooperation through bilateral relations and the EU as well as promotion of cooperative relations with each country. Foreign Minister Motegi visited Poland in May to attend the "V4+Japan" Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and in July he made the first visit to the Baltic States by a Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Furthermore, Japan conducts public diplomacy activities including dispatch of experts, cooperation with European think tanks and Japan's Friendship Ties Programs "MIRAI" (see the Column on page 126) for intellectual and people-to-people exchange that allows young people from Europe to visit Japan. These activities are aimed to promote the right picture of Japan and Asia and mutual understanding. Particularly by utilizing online exchanges, Japan is working on strengthening relations with Europe by conducting information-sharing and exchanges of views with European countries, organizations, and experts in a wide range of fields such as politics, security, economy, business, science and technology, education, culture and art.

2 Regional Situations in Europe

(1) The European Union (EU)

The EU is a political and economic union consisting of 27 member states with a total population of about 447 million. Sharing fundamental values and principles, the EU is an important partner for Japan in addressing global issues.

<Recent Developments of the EU>

For the EU, responding to COVID-19 remained a major challenge in 2021 continuing on from 2020. The European Commission, the executive body of the EU, had been procuring vaccines in bulk for EU member states. However, due to

¹ For more information, see "Other European Regions" on p. 136.

delays in supply from pharmaceutical companies, the Commission began applying the transparency and authorisation mechanism for exports of COVID-19 vaccines from January 30. The EU has stated that the mechanism, which was initiated amidst the growing trend to secure supply of vaccines for one's own country centered on developed countries, is not an export ban but rather a temporary system that requires approval from member states for exports to third countries to ensure transparency in vaccine exports outside the EU, and conforms with the EU's international commitments under the WTO and the G20. Although vaccine supplies within the EU have stabilized since spring, the mechanism was extended three times and remained in place until December 31. The stabilization of vaccine supply has led to a sharp increase in the vaccination rate in the EU. On August 31, the European Commission announced that 70% of the adult population in the region has been fully vaccinated, achieving the target set at the beginning of the year. On the other hand, looking at the vaccination rates in individual EU member states, there is a clear disparity between Eastern and Western Europe, with low vaccine coverage particularly in Eastern European countries.

With the increase in vaccination rates, some EU member states started to resume economic activities in May. On May 20, the EU revised its recommendations on border control into the EU, announcing a direction to allow vaccinated people to enter the EU and relaxing the criteria on third countries for allowing travel from outside the EU.

In addition, as a move toward Europe's economic recovery, the EU's recovery instrument, NextGenerationEU, was launched in January 2021 to support economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and work on measures to create a greener, more digital, and resilient future. As for the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), which is at the core of NextGenerationEU, 22 member countries have completed the EU

approval process for their country's own recovery and resilience plan and advance payments of the requested funds have begun (as of March 1, 2022).

While working on its response to COVID-19, the EU released the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in April followed by the Joint Communication on the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in September, which further elaborates on the Strategy released in April. The Joint Communication released in September mentions China's growing military power in the Indo-Pacific and increasing tensions in the East and South China Seas and the Taiwan Strait. It also states that the EU will advance cooperation with its partners in the Indo-Pacific in seven priority areas: the economy, climate change, ocean governance, the digital field, connectivity, security and defense, and human security. Japan was mentioned as a partner for cooperation in all of these areas. Moreover, in July, the EU released a new document on EU connectivity titled "A Globally Connected Europe," and in December, the EU announced its "Global Gateway" to embody its connectivity strategy and to support quality infrastructure development.

<Japan-EU Relations>

Japan and the EU are strengthening their cooperation under the Japan-EU EPA, which entered into force in February 2019, and the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), of which provisional application started at the same time. In May 2021, Prime Minister Suga held the Japan-EU Summit (in the teleconference format) with President Michel of the European Council and President von der Leyen of the European Commission. During the Summit, they exchanged views regarding FOIP, global challenges such as climate change and COVID-19 countermeasures, Japan-EU relations, and regional situations and they agreed on Japan-EU cooperation and collaboration in extensive fields. They also distributed a joint announcement and decided to

launch the “Japan-EU Green Alliance“ on climate change and environmental issues. In addition, Foreign Minister Motegi attended the EU Foreign Affairs Council (virtual format) in January as the first Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs to ever attend the Council. He explained Japan’s views and initiatives on FOIP. In May, on the occasion of the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers’ Meeting, Foreign Minister Motegi also held a Japan-EU Foreign Ministers’ Meeting with High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Borrell in London, in which they exchanged views regarding FOIP, EU-Japan cooperation on global challenges, and regional situations. In February 2022, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific (virtual format) co-hosted by France, which held the EU Presidency for the first half of the year, and the EU. He gave a speech in which he referred to the severe security environment in the Indo-Pacific region and stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation with like-minded countries and partners.

In relation to COVID-19, Japan has been importing vaccines from within the EU, and they were imported smoothly under the transparency and authorisation mechanism for exports of COVID-19 vaccines. In addition, since July 1st 2020, the EU has published a list of third countries for which the EU member states should apply relaxation of restriction measures for entry from outside the EU and Schengen Area (in which national borders have been abolished based on the Schengen Agreement, which ensures freedom of movement between European countries). The list is reviewed every two weeks in principle. Japan was initially included in this list. It was

later removed on January 28, 2021, then added to the list again on June 3, 2021. Following its removal again on September 9, Japan has not been included since then (as of March 1, 2022).

The EU, with its economy scale that follows the United States and China, is an important economic partner of Japan, ranking second among Japan’s import partners, third among export partners, and first in terms of the balance of direct investment in Japan. Economic relations between Japan and the EU are further deepening on the basis of the Japan-EU EPA, which entered into force in 2019. Since the entry into force of the EPA, Japan and the EU have been appropriately implementing the agreement through the Joint Committee and advisory committees as stipulated in the agreement. In February 2021, the second meeting of the Joint Committee was held to discuss the implementation of the Japan-EU EPA among ministers. Preliminary discussions were also held to reassess the need to include provisions on the free flow of data in the Japan-EU EPA. Various advisory committee meetings were also held sequentially through teleconferences and other means despite COVID-19. Japan will continue to aim for the steady implementation of the Agreement and further development of Japan-EU economic relations by strengthening cooperation between Japan and the EU.

Furthermore, on June 30, the Agreement on Civil Aviation Safety between Japan and the European Union entered into force. This agreement aims to reduce the burdens on the aviation industry and promote the free flow of civil aeronautical products by removing duplication in inspections and other procedures for the import and export of aircraft and other civil aeronautical products.

MIRAI^(Note), future connected through Japan-Europe Youth Exchange Program: Initiatives under the COVID-19 pandemic

The MIRAI Program, a short-term youth exchange program between Japan and Europe, is striving to promote exchange between young people in Japan and Europe and to improve understanding of Japan even while facing the challenge that the participants were unable to visit Japan due to the COVID-19 pandemic through online interaction with Japanese universities and networking events for previous participants.

■ **Online exchange with Japanese universities**

Feedback from students that participated from Europe

- The time we spent with the Japanese university students was very meaningful, and I fully understood their way of thinking about Japanese society and culture. My understanding and affection for Japan became even deeper.
- I deepened my knowledge not only of Japan, but also European countries. I plan to write an essay on how I learned about issues from a range of perspectives.
- It was fascinating to learn with the Japanese students about how Edo (former name of Tokyo) - the city with the highest population in the 19th century - embraced the concept of *mottainai* (waste not, want not), and treasured all of its resources.

Tachibana Masahiko, Professor, Innovative Global Program, College of Engineering, Shibaura Institute of Technology (collaboration on university exchange)

The students from Europe showed great interest in Japanese traditions such as innovative long-standing Japanese companies and how Edo was a recycling and sustainable city. It seemed that the Japanese and European students learned a lot from each other through the program, and more than 90% of participants responded in a follow-up survey that they were "satisfied" with it. It was the biggest benefit for us to show that online programs work well enough as a platform for international exchange.

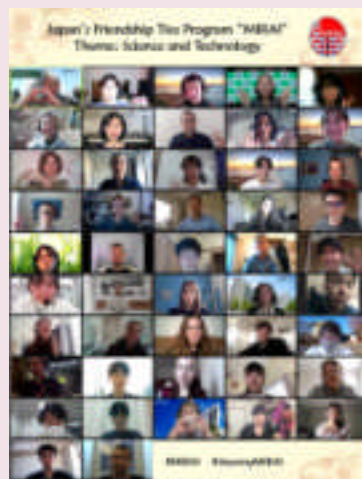
■ **MIRAI alumni networking events**

Shokhrukh Sirojiddinov (participated from Uzbekistan in FY2015)

The MIRAI program marked my first exposure to Japan. I was personally impressed with the technological development and public etiquette among the Japanese. After participating in the MIRAI Program, I returned to Japan and studied there for three years. I had a job offer from a Japanese company and currently live and work in Tokyo. At a MIRAI Alumni event, I was chosen as one of the speakers to talk about my life and career in Japan for over 100 participants from European countries. Many participants reached out to me asking questions. I was happy to answer them and share my experience with fellow participants.

Claudia Bonillo Fernández (participated from Spain in FY2018)

My growing fascination with Japan made me want to deepen my research on its culture at an academic level, so I specialized in Japanese Studies at a university in Spain. Participating in this program allowed me to experience Japan in a deeper way, which reasserted my wish to learn much more about this culture and above all, to live there, which led me to do a research stay at Kyoto University. During my stay, I coordinated an online seminar on the topic of my doctoral thesis, supported and attended by Japanese and European



Online exchange with Shibaura Institute of Technology (April and May)

universities, being a prime example of how one event has managed to connect different countries including Spain and Japan.

Antonio Meleca (participated from Italy in FY2019)

My experience as a MIRAI delegate allowed me to differentiate myself among many applicants for multiple high-level internships. I was able to do an internship within international organizations and join a youth-led think tank contributing to the research for EU-Asia/Pacific Studies. Thanks to these positive experiences, I decided to present my career path during the 2021 MIRAI reunion. The presentation allowed me to broaden my network and I ended up completely taking up the role of a MIRAI promoter through social media. I frequently find myself inviting my fellow interns to apply to the MIRAI program.

The continuation of online exchange has been an opportunity to learn thoughts about relations between Japan and Europe from each and every participant as well as to strengthen the bonds among them. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan will continue initiatives leading to a bright MIRAI (“future” in Japanese) between Japan and Europe.

Note: MIRAI: Mutual-understanding, Intellectual Relations and Academic Exchange Initiative

(2) United Kingdom

Following the resurgence of COVID-19, lockdown measures were introduced for the third time in the UK from January to March. On the other hand, the UK approved COVID-19 vaccines at the end of 2020, ahead of the rest of the world, and proceeded with vaccinations, which temporarily contributed to enhancing the Johnson administration’s approval rate. Since March 2021, the Government of the UK has relaxed restrictions in stages, and in July, amid rising numbers of infections, it’s “living with COVID-19” policy was introduced by eliminating most of the restrictions. Additionally, the Johnson administration has been promoting initiatives for “levelling up” every part of the UK and reforming the health and nursing care systems. As part of the cabinet reshuffle in September, Elizabeth Truss, former Secretary of State for International Trade, was appointed as Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs.

In regard to Brexit, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the UK that was concluded on December 24, 2020 (and officially entered into force in May) and avoided the situation of tariffs being established between the UK and the EU. On the other hand, challenges remain

in relations with the EU over the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, fishing rights, and other issues.

On the security front, the UK has been strengthening its engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. In March 2021, it issued the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, in which it positioned Japan as “one of our closest strategic partners, including on security.” As for Japan-UK relations, the UK carrier strike group centered on the UK’s aircraft carrier HMSQueen Elizabeth made a port call to Japan in September, and various forms of joint exercises have been implemented. Bilateral security and defense cooperation have deepened dramatically in recent years, including the start of negotiations for a Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement in October.

Dialogue and exchanges between Japan and the UK have been actively conducted at various levels, including at the summit and foreign minister level. During these, the two countries shared the view that Japan and the UK would promote cooperation toward the realization of FOIP, and they cooperated closely for G7 solidarity, regional situations, climate change countermeasures, and the like in light of the UK holding the



Japan-UK Summit Meeting (November 2, Glasgow, UK)

G7 Presidency and Presidency for the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) in 2021. Prime Minister Suga held telephone calls with Prime Minister Johnson in February and May, and held an in-person meeting during the G7 Cornwall Summit in June. Prime Minister Kishida also held a telephone call with Prime Minister Johnson in October and an in-person meeting during COP26 in November.

Foreign Minister Motegi held the Fourth Japan-UK Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting ("2+2") online in February. He also held the Ninth Japan-UK Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue in May, a Japan-UK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in June, and a telephone call in September with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Dominic Raab. In addition, he held a telephone call with Secretary of State for International Trade Truss in May, and again in September immediately after her appointment as State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs. He also held an in-person meeting with her during the UN General Assembly in the same month. Foreign Minister Hayashi held an in-person meeting with Foreign Secretary Truss during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in December.

With regard to culture, in relation to the "Japan-UK Season of Culture," the period which bridges the two major sports events of the Rugby World Cup 2019 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, the "Japan Season of Culture" in the UK was extended until 2021 following

postponement of many events resulted from the spread of COVID-19. Various related events were held throughout the year, mainly online.

(3) France

President Macron's approval rating, which rose due to his response to COVID-19, remained relatively high at around 40% in 2021. In France, infections spread again from the beginning of the year and strict measures were adopted, including a nationwide curfew. However, restrictions have been eased since June 2021, when vaccinations helped bring down the spread of infections. With a 100 billion euro economic recovery plan announced in September 2020, the Macron administration is working on the recovery of the damaged economy while responding to COVID-19. While effectively postponing pension reform in anticipation of the presidential election in April 2022, President Macron announced in a televised speech in November countermeasures against COVID-19, an energy policy that included the construction of new nuclear power plants, and the launch of a plan to strengthen investment to secure the country's technological and production capacity.

With respect to external affairs, France promoted engagement in the Indo-Pacific, including leading the formulation of the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy. France also strengthened security and defense cooperation in the Indo-Pacific with Japan, including the training fleet "*Jeanne d'Arc*" which held the Japan-France-U.S.-Australia-India joint exercise in May, and the bilateral ground exercise between Japan and France which took place within Japan for the first time during a port call in Japan.

In addition, dialogues were held between Japan and France at various levels, including at the summit and foreign minister levels. In May, Foreign Minister Motegi met with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian, and they confirmed that they would work together to materialize the bilateral cooperation towards the



Japan-France Summit Meeting (July 24, Tokyo)

realization of FOIP. In June, Prime Minister Suga met with President Macron during the G7 Summit, and they confirmed cooperation toward the success of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, held in 2021 as well as the Paris Games to be held in 2024. In July, Prime Minister Suga held a summit meeting and luncheon meeting with President Macron, who was the only leader of a major country to visit Japan to attend the opening ceremony of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020. The leaders confirmed the promotion of bilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and exchanged views on cooperation for global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity, and development in Africa. In September, during his visit to New York, Foreign Minister Motegi met with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Le Drian and confirmed continued cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. In November, Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call with President Macron, in which he welcomed the significant strengthening of the bilateral security and defense cooperation, and shared the view to continue to work closely together. In the same month, Foreign Minister Hayashi also held a telephone call with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Le Drian. In December, during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, they held an in-person meeting and shared the view to further deepen Japan-France cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

(4) Germany

The Bundestag election held on September 26



Japan-Germany Foreign Ministers' Meeting (December 11, Liverpool, UK)

attracted a great deal of attention as the election to determine the successor to Chancellor Angela Merkel, who had announced her decision not to run in the election. Until 2020, under the leadership of Chancellor Merkel, the response to COVID-19 was highly evaluated, and the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) had a high approval rating. However, from the beginning of 2021, the approval rating rose for the Social Democratic Party (SPD) candidate Olaf Scholz as the CDU chancellor candidate, Armin Laschet, lost ground due to the response to flooding in western Germany and the scandal involving false statements on the resume of Green Party chancellor candidate, co-chair Annalena Baerbock. As a result, the SPD became the leading party (25.7%, an increase of 5.2% compared to the previous election), the CDU/CSU came in second but with the lowest turnout since its formation (24.1%, a decrease of 8.8%), and the Green Party came in third (14.8%, an increase of 5.9%). Coalition negotiations between the parties continued after the election. On November 24, the SPD, Green Party, and Free Democratic Party (FDP) reached a consensus on a coalition agreement. On December 8, the new administration (the so-called "traffic light coalition") was inaugurated with former Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister of Finance Scholz as Prime Minister. Attention is being paid to administration operations after Former Chancellor Merkel, who had led the government for 16 years since 2005, steps down.

With regard to Japan-Germany bilateral

relations, high-level exchanges continued in 2021, the 160th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Germany relations, in the form of summit meetings and foreign ministers' meetings, both in person and by telephone. In addition, the Japan-Germany Agreement on the Security of Information was signed in March, and the first Japan-Germany Foreign and Defense Ministers' Meeting ("2+2") was held online in April. In November, the German naval frigate "Bayern," which was dispatched to the Indo-Pacific region under Germany's "Indo-Pacific Guidelines" established in September 2020, paid a port call to Japan and conducted a joint exercise. Japan-Germany relations have thus been strengthened, centered on the security field.

(5) Italy

In January, a vote of confidence on the Conte administration was held in both the Chamber of Deputies and Senate of the Republic after one of the ruling coalition parties broke away due to conflicts over the European Stability Mechanism and the European recovery funds. Although the vote passed in both houses, the administration could not receive an absolute majority in the Senate of the Republic, and Prime Minister Conte announced his resignation. President Sergio Mattarella called on all the political parties to give confidence to a non-party cabinet to deal with the emergency situation, and a new broad coalition government was formed in February 2021 with former European Central Bank President Mario Draghi inaugurated



Japan-Italy Foreign Ministers' Meeting (June 29, Bari, Italy)

as Prime Minister. Prime Minister Draghi enjoys a high approval rating because of the concrete results he has achieved regarding his administration's priorities of the promotion of vaccination and the use of the European recovery funds.

In regard to COVID-19, the number of infections had been on the decline since late November 2020, but began to increase in late February. After peaking in late March, infections began to decline again as vaccination progressed. Since late April, restrictions on the use of theaters, gyms, and other facilities have been gradually eased, and in late June, restrictions were lifted throughout Italy. Due to the rapid progress of vaccination, the majority of the population has completed the second dose, and the government is implementing efforts for the third dose. In October, a measure requiring all workers to have vaccination certificates and employers to confirm possession of such certificates came into effect. However, protests against the measure broke out, and there were clashes between some rioters and the police.

As for Japan-Italy relations, Prime Minister Suga held a telephone call with Prime Minister Draghi in March, confirming cooperation with Italy, which held the G20 Presidency. Foreign Minister Motegi held meetings with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Di Maio during the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting in May and the G20 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting in June. They confirmed the strengthening of cooperation for addressing global challenges such as recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, as well as for the realization of FOIP. Foreign Minister Hayashi also met with Minister Di Maio during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in December.

(6) Spain

The second administration of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, inaugurated in January 2020, is governed by a minority ruling coalition government in cooperation with various parties outside the cabinet. The government has achieved a

high vaccination rate, and it is also focusing on economic measures that will continue even after COVID-19 is contained, using recovery funds distributed by the EU. The administration has maintained a certain level of approval since the outbreak of COVID-19.

In regard to Japan-Spain relations, the two countries are closely cooperating in the international arena, while strengthening bilateral relations in various fields, including politics, economy, and culture, under the strategic partnership agreed upon at the summit level meeting in 2018. In March, an interim meeting of the Japan-Spain Symposium, which aims to promote mutual understanding and strengthen cooperation between the two countries, was held online. Another meeting was held in a hybrid format in December. In addition, cooperation was promoted in both the public and private sectors in the fields of the economy, science and technology, among others, including the entry into force of the new Japan-Spain tax convention in May, and the third Meeting of the Japan-Spain Joint Committee on Cooperation in Science and Technology being held in June.

(7) Poland

The coalition government established in 2015, led by the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party, continues to govern with relative stability against the backdrop of a strong economy and generous welfare policies. Although support for the Morawiecki administration temporarily declined due to the effects of COVID-19, the economic impact was limited compared to other European countries, and support for the administration has been recovering along with economic recovery.

In regard to Japan-Poland relations, Foreign Minister Motegi visited Poland in May and held a Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Rau. At the meeting, they confirmed the policy of strengthening cooperation in various fields, including politics, economy, and culture, through the signing of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategic Partnership between Japan and

Poland (2021-2025). In addition, the 7th "V4 plus Japan" Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held under the Polish Presidency, in which the ministers agreed to advance cooperation with the V4 for FOIP and to support the Western Balkans. Furthermore, in July, President Duda visited Japan on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. During the summit meeting with Prime Minister Suga, they exchanged views on FOIP and the "Three Seas Initiative" led by Poland, and agreed to further deepen the strategic partnership between the two countries.

(8) Ukraine

The situation in eastern Ukraine, which had been unstable since 2014, had been relatively calm since the cease-fire agreement in July 2020. However, the situation began to deteriorate again around February 2021. In the first half of April, concerns increased about the buildup of Russian military forces, particularly around Ukraine's eastern border. During the second half of April, Russia ordered its troops to return to their original bases, and the situation appeared to have reached a lull.



Prime Minister Kishida attending the G7 Summit Teleconference Meeting (February 24, 2022, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Relations Office)



G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (February 19, 2022, Germany)

However, from the second half of October, the Russian military buildup around the Ukrainian border was again confirmed. In December, at the G7 Foreign Affairs and Development Ministers' Meeting, a statement was issued calling on Russia to ease tensions and pursue dialogue through diplomatic channels. Despite continued diplomatic efforts, including two U.S.-Russia videoconference summit meetings in December, there were no signs of improvement during 2021.

The situation became even more tense in 2022. While Russian forces were further reinforced, especially in the areas near the Ukrainian border, diplomatic negotiations continued among various countries to reduce tensions, including at the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held on February 19. However, Russia's aggression began on February 24, when President Putin announced the start of a "special military operation" in pursuit of "demilitarization" and "denazification" in Ukraine, claiming that the purpose of the operation was to "protect people who have been subjected to genocide" by the Government of Ukraine. On the same day, Japan issued a Statement by Foreign Minister in which it condemned Russia's actions in the strongest terms. In addition, at the G7 Summit Teleconference Meeting, a G7 Leaders' Statement was issued condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. Furthermore, on February 25, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a telephone call with Foreign Minister Kuleba, and conveyed Japan's readiness to urgently provide assistance to Ukraine through loans of at least 100 million US dollars, and stated that sanctions against Russia would be implemented promptly. On February 28, Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call with President Zelenskyy, in which he stated that Japan would impose further sanctions on Russia. Prime Minister Kishida also conveyed that in addition to the loans

already announced, Japan would provide 100 million US dollars in emergency humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainian people who were facing hardship in Ukraine and neighboring countries. President Zelenskyy expressed his high appreciation and deep gratitude to Japan for these efforts.

On February 28, the first round of talks between Ukraine and Russia was held in Gomel Oblast near the Ukrainian border in southeastern Belarus. The Russian side made demands such as the confirmation of Ukraine's status as a neutral country with demilitarization as a prerequisite and recognition of Russia's jurisdiction over Crimea. The future of the negotiations is unpredictable.

Russia's recent aggression against Ukraine is an attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force. It is an outrageous act that shakes the very foundation of the international order, not only in Europe but also in Asia, a serious violation of international law, and completely unacceptable. This is a matter that also concerns Japan's own security. Japan will act in solidarity with Ukraine and unity with the international community, including the G7, in order to resolutely defend the international order.

3 Collaboration with European Regional Institutions, and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

(1) Cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

As a military alliance that aims at providing collective defense for its 30 member countries, NATO² provides collective defense for its member countries, and also provides engagement in cooperative security efforts with non-EU countries and organizations and in crisis management outside of the region that could pose a direct threat to the security of the territories and

2 NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
See the MOFA website for details: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/nato/index.html>



peoples of NATO member countries, including security-keeping operations and counter-terrorism efforts. In Afghanistan, NATO had been conducting its Resolute Support Mission (RSM) since 2015, which ended with the withdrawal of U.S. troops in August.

NATO has been increasingly interested in the Asia-Pacific region in recent years. At the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs held online in December 2020, a statement by Foreign Minister Motegi was read out by the Ambassador of Japan to NATO. This was done for the first time by a Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs. Foreign Minister Motegi pointed that the current security environment in East Asia has become increasingly severe, and that NATO is a reassuring partner for the FOIP vision promoted by Japan. In the Communiqué issued at the NATO Summit in June, it was announced that NATO would enhance dialogue and cooperation with its partners in the Asia-Pacific, including Japan.

Japan and NATO are partners that share fundamental values, and both have been taking specific steps toward collaboration based on the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme (IPCP) (revised in May 2018 and June 2020), which was signed in May 2014. Japan has participated in NATO's Cyber Coalition, as well as training exercises related to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) as an observer. Japan has also dispatched a female SDF official to the NATO headquarters for the fourth time since December 2021 in order to promote Japan-NATO cooperation on cyber issues, Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and other fields. Through the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Trust Fund, a project that aims to promote arms control and disarmament, as well as democratization and regional stabilization, utilizing NATO's specialized military expertise, Japan has also been providing support to process unexploded ordnance in Ukraine, and to help capacity building for demilitarization of Serbia's Ministry of Defense arsenal.

(2) Cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

OSCE is a regional security organization with 57 participating States across Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus region, and North America, that works to bridge differences between member countries and foster trust through conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction in these regions through a comprehensive approach. Japan has cooperated with OSCE activities since 1992 as an Asian Partner for Co-operation. Japan provides support for preventing terrorism by means such as strengthening border patrol in Afghanistan and Central Asia through the Border Management Staff College (a capacity building organization) in Tajikistan, and also gives support in conducting election monitoring as well as to the projects that promote women's social advancement. Considering that the OSCE plays an important role in improving the situation in Ukraine, Japan has been providing financial support and dispatching experts to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) (experts have been dispatched intermittently since August 2015). At the Ministerial Council held in Sweden in December, Ambassador of Japan to Austria Mizutani Akira participated and stated that Japan will continue to support capacity-building for border control of the OSCE participating states, and will continue to actively cooperate with the OSCE upon marking the 30th anniversary of the Japan-OSCE partnership in 2022.

(3) Cooperation with the Council of Europe (CoE)

The CoE is an international organization comprising 47 member states in Europe which has played a key role in establishing international standards in areas concerning democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. As the CoE's sole observer country in Asia, Japan has contributed to the CoE, including by providing knowledge and supporting the holding of meetings. There

were participants from Japan who gave policy statements at the side event of the Meeting on AI in July, at the World Forum for Democracy in November, and at the Octopus Conference 2021. Besides this, as 2021 marked the 25th anniversary of Japan's appointment as an observer country, cherry blossom trees were donated and planted at the CoE headquarters, and a special website was opened to issue congratulatory messages from the Japanese government and Council of Europe officials.

(4) Cooperation through the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

ASEM was established in 1996 as the sole forum for dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe. Its members currently comprise 51 countries and two institutions, and works through summit meetings, ministers' meetings including Foreign Ministers' meetings, seminars, and other activities focused on three pillars, namely (1) politics, (2) economy, and (3) society and culture.

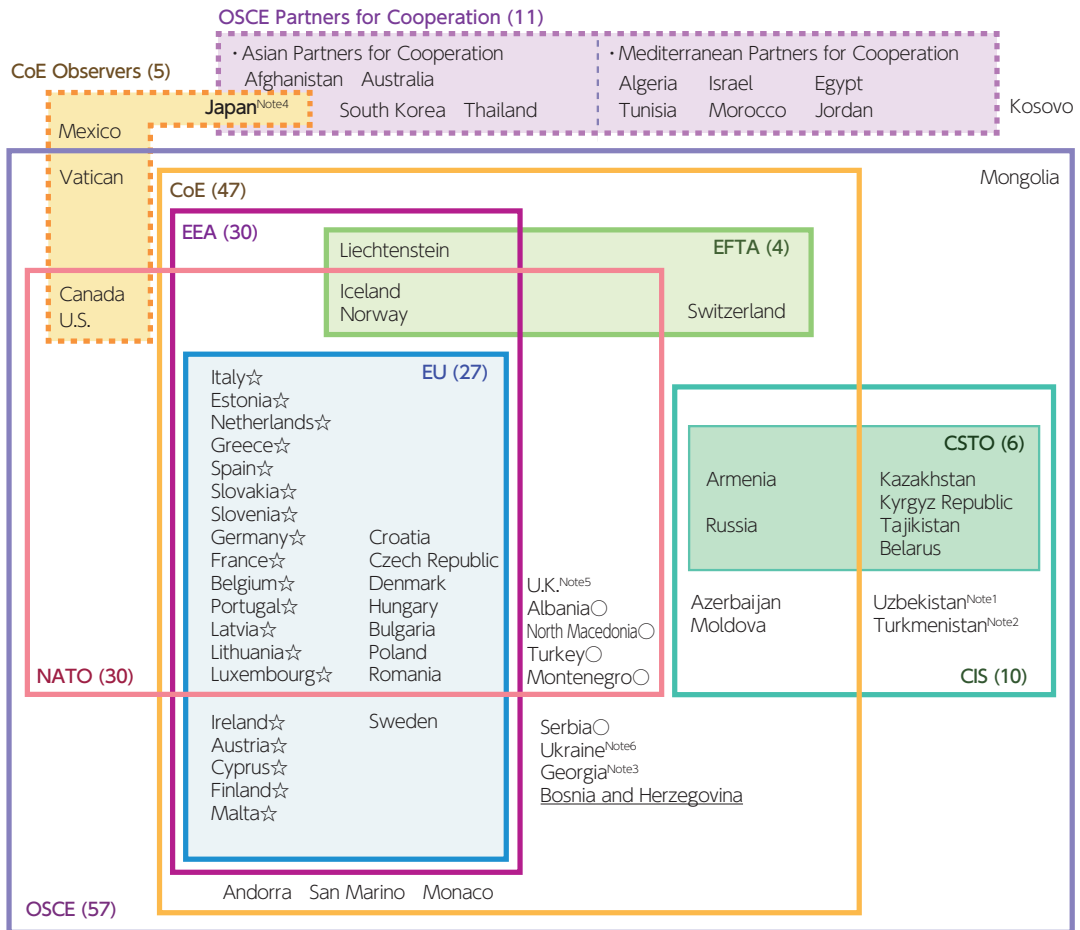
On November 25 and 26, the 13th ASEM Summit was held online under the chairmanship of Cambodia. Prime Minister Kishida attended the Summit from Japan, and expressed his determination to aim for the realization of a new form of capitalism, to actively contribute to the resolution of global challenges through measures against COVID-19 and climate change, and to lead international efforts to "build back better" from COVID-19. Furthermore, Prime Minister Kishida stated that Japan would play an active role in strengthening rules-based connectivity in cooperation with other countries toward the realization of FOIP, and pointed out the importance of implementing quality infrastructure investment in accordance with international principles. In regard to the regional situation, he expressed strong concern over nuclear and missile activities by North Korea, and said that Japan would cooperate with ASEM partners to respond to

North Korea, including for the abductions issue. He strongly opposed that unilateral attempts to change the status quo and activities to increase tensions had been escalated and actions against the rule of law had been seen in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. He also expressed strong concern over the situation in Hong Kong and the human rights situation in Xinjiang.

The Chair's Statement of the 13th ASEM Summit reaffirmed the importance of the partnership between Asia and Europe. It also mentioned the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement (CVID) of North Korea's nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs, the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, full compliance with international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and ensuring maritime security. In light of the spread of COVID-19, the Phnom Penh Statement on the post-COVID-19 Socio-Economic Recovery, issued in conjunction with the Chair's Statement, communicated priority measures for recovery of Asian and European countries, including international cooperation on COVID-19 vaccines, Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT), and further climate change measures.

Japan has supported the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), ASEM's only permanent institution, with its project of stockpiling personal protective equipment (PPE) and antiviral drugs to combat infectious diseases, cooperating in the emergency transportation of stockpiled supplies to ASEM partners, as well as the implementation of capacity building workshops and public health network projects. From May to October, ASEF stockpiled supplies were provided to Cambodia, Laos, Bangladesh, Brunei, and Viet Nam. In addition, Japan contributed to the activities of ASEM by assisting with the online Environment Forum co-hosted by the ASEF and related organizations, and making financial contributions to the ASEF.

Major Frameworks of Europe



<Legend> () indicates number of member countries
 ○: Candidate to be an EU member (5)
 ☆: Euro member states (19)
 ☆: Member states of the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) (1)

- Note1 Uzbekistan ceased its membership in the CSTO in 2012.
- Note2 Turkmenistan has been an associate member of the CIS since 2005.
- Note3 Georgia notified the CIS of its decision to leave the organization in August 2008, and formally withdrew from the CIS in August 2009.
- Note4 Japan is a partner country of NATO.
- Note5 The U.K. withdrew from the EU on January 31, 2020.
- Note6 Ukraine signed a presidential decree in April 2018 to withdraw from the CIS.

<Abbreviations>
 CoE (Council of Europe): (47)
 CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States): (10)
 CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization): (6)
 EEA (European Economic Area): (30)
 EFTA (European Free Trade Association): (4)
 EU (European Union): (27)
 NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization): (30)
 OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe): (57)

Other European Regions

Nordic countries

Iceland: In May, the 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial Meeting, co-hosted by Iceland, was held in Tokyo, which was the first one to be held in Asia. The meeting focused on promoting Arctic research through international cooperation.

Sweden: In March, Prime Minister Suga held a telephone call with Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, and they shared the view to further enhance bilateral relations in a wide range of fields including the economy, climate change and digitalization. Prime Minister Löfven agreed to cooperate with Japan toward the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," and both leaders shared the view to cooperate on regional affairs, including China and Myanmar.

Denmark: In November, Foreign Minister Hayashi met Minister for Foreign Affairs Jeppe Kofod, who was visiting Japan. The two ministers welcomed the progress made in the coordination of the "Joint Strategic Work Program" aimed at developing the "Strategic Partnership" that was agreed upon by the leaders of the two countries in 2014, into more concrete cooperation. The ministers confirmed further cooperation in the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific", as well as in international fora, such as measures on climate change. The two ministers also exchanged views on regional affairs and shared the view to strengthen cooperation as like-minded countries that share the fundamental values.

Norway: Prime Minister Kishida became a member of the Norwegian-led "High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy," and at its third meeting in November, he introduced Japan's efforts and expressed Japan's contribution to building a sustainable ocean economy.

Finland: Foreign Minister Motegi held talks with Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade Ville Skinnari, who was visiting Japan. The two ministers welcomed progress in bilateral cooperation, especially in digital and cyber fields, and shared the view to strengthen cooperation in international arenas, including measures against COVID-19. They also exchanged views on cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and concurred on the importance of realizing a free and open international order based on the rule of the law.

Benelux countries

The Netherlands: In June, on the occasion of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Italy, Foreign Minister Motegi held talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs Sigrid Kaag. The two ministers affirmed that they would strengthen cooperation toward the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific". Furthermore, the Netherlands dispatched the frigate *Evertsen* to the Indo-Pacific as part of the UK's Carrier Strike Group and also made a port call in Japan, in accordance with its own Indo-Pacific guidelines announced in 2020.

Belgium: During the COVID-19 pandemic, Belgium played a major role in supplying vaccines to the world with its vaccine development and production bases, trading ports, and international airports. Regarding relations with Japan, Prime Minister Suga and Foreign Minister Motegi issued messages of condolences regarding the flood damage caused by torrential rains in southern Belgium in July.

Luxembourg: In July, His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri visited Japan to attend the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

San Marino: Following the general election of the Grand and General Council of San Marino (equivalent to the parliament) held on December 8, 2020, the Beccari administration, headed by Luca Beccari, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Economic Cooperation and Telecommunications, took office on January 8, 2021. In July, Captains Regent Gian Carlo Venturini and Marco Nicolini visited Japan to attend the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

Portugal: In July, Minister in charge of International Exposition Inoue visited Portugal and held talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs Augusto Ernesto Santos Silva. Minister Santos Silva expressed Portugal's participation in the Osaka-Kansai Expo, while Minister Inoue welcomed Portugal's announcement of its participation and affirmed cooperation with Portugal for the success of the Expo.

Monaco: In July, His Royal Highness Prince Albert II visited Japan to attend the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

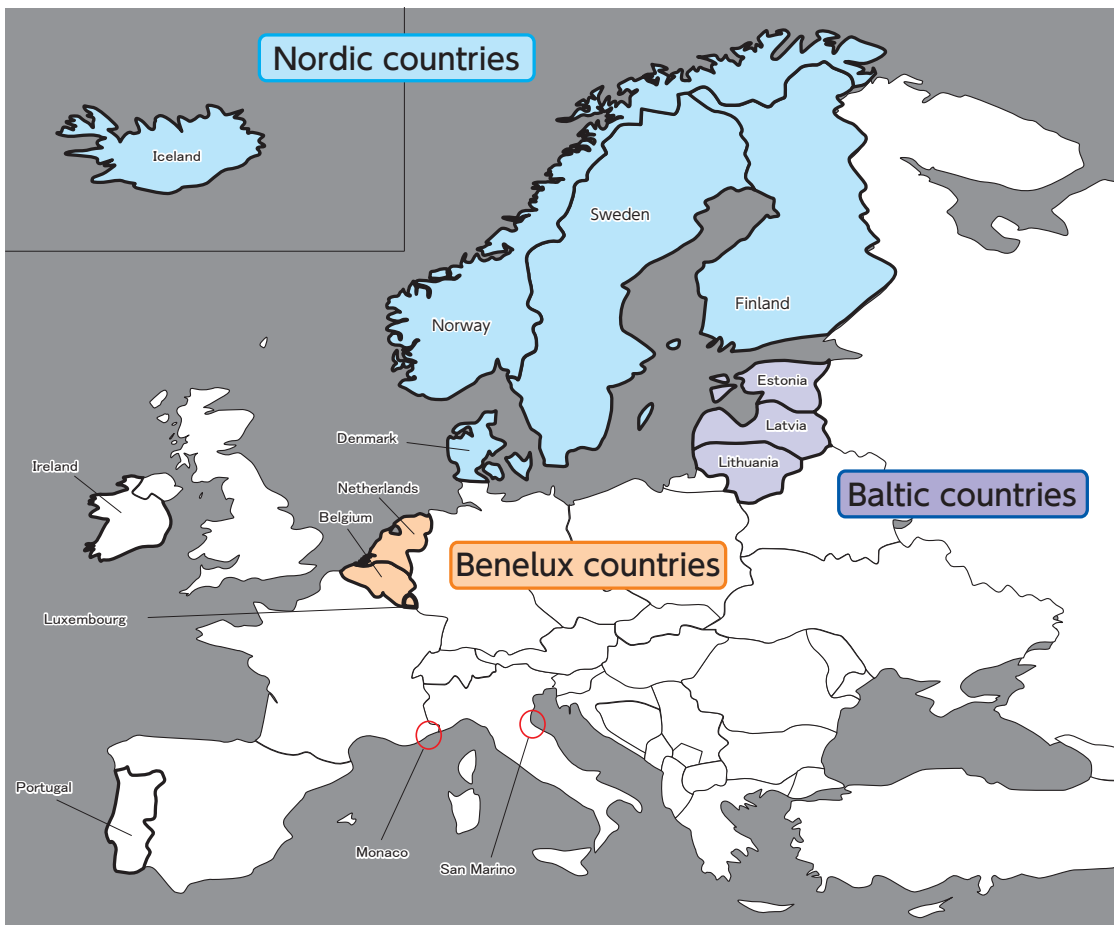
Baltic countries

Estonia: In July, Foreign Minister Motegi became the first Japanese Foreign Minister to visit Estonia, where he held talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs Eva-Maria Liimets and paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Kaja Kallas. Both sides confirmed that they would further promote broad cooperation on the occasion of the visit and the 100th anniversary of the friendship between Japan and Estonia in 2021. Estonia expressed its support for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" and shared the view on the importance of like-minded countries to maintain and strengthen a rules-based free and open international order. In August, Prime Minister Suga held a summit meeting with President Kersti Kaljulaid, who was visiting Japan, and concurred on cooperation in the digital and cyber fields, and the cooperation toward the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific."

Latvia: In July, Foreign Minister Motegi became the first Japanese Foreign Minister to visit Latvia, where he held a talk with Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkevics and paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš. Minister Motegi confirmed with both ministers to further promote broad cooperation on the occasion of the visit and the 100th anniversary of the friendship between Japan and Latvia in 2021. The Latvian side expressed its strong support for the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" and shared the view on the importance of like-minded countries to maintain and strengthen a rules-based free and open international order.

Lithuania: In July, Foreign Minister Motegi visited Lithuania and held a talk with Minister of Foreign Affairs Gabrielius Landsbergis and paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte. Minister Motegi confirmed with both ministers to further promote broad cooperation on the occasion of the visit and the 100th anniversary of their friendship in 2022. The Lithuanian side expressed its support for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" and shared the view on the importance of like-minded countries to maintain and strengthen a rules-based free and open international order.

Ireland: In December, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a video conference with Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defense Simon Coveney, where the ministers shared the view to further promote cooperation to develop bilateral relations, including in the political and economic fields. The ministers also exchanged views on regional affairs and shared the view to strengthen cooperation among like-minded countries toward the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific."



V4

Bilateral relations between Japan and the V4 countries of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have a long history and are traditionally friendly. During Foreign Minister Motegi's visit to Warsaw in May, he attended the 7th "V4 plus Japan" Foreign Ministers' Meeting, where the ministers confirmed their cooperation toward the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" and their cooperation in assistance for the Western Balkans.

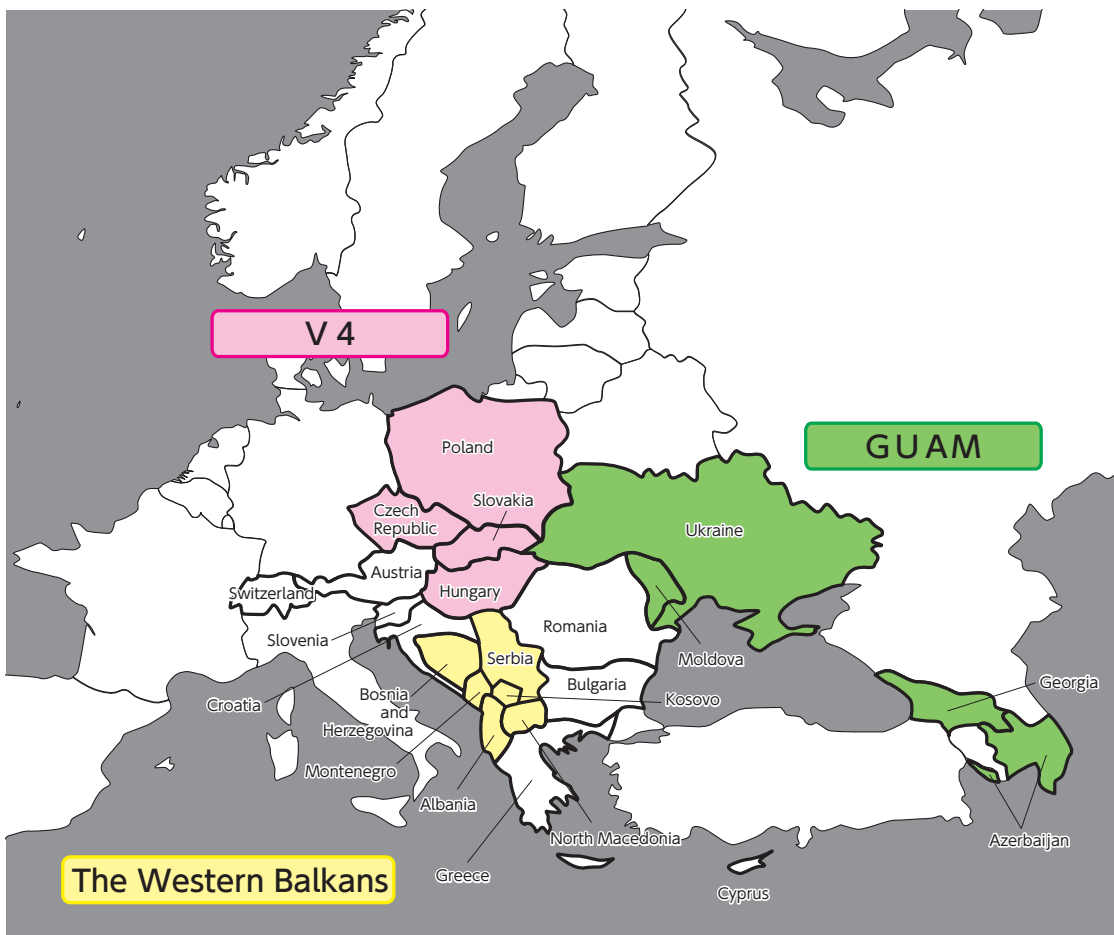
Poland and Hungary are increasingly at odds with the EU over "the rule of the law," delaying EU approval of recovery funds for both countries. The passage of LGBT-related legislation in Hungary in July and a ruling by the Polish Constitutional Court in October on the relationship between the Constitution and EU law and other decisions have created problems concerning the basic values of the EU and the sovereignty of individual countries.

Poland: Japan was active in high-level dialogues, including a telephone call between Prime Minister Suga and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki in March, a foreign ministers' meeting during Foreign Minister Motegi's visit to Poland in May, and President Andrej Duda's visit to Japan in July, in which the two countries affirmed to strengthen their strategic partnership relations.

Hungary: Foreign Minister Motegi held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó during his visit to Japan in March and during Foreign Minister Motegi's visit to Warsaw in May. Both ministers agreed to promote "V4 plus Japan" cooperation under Hungary's V4 Presidency (V4 Presidency since July). The ministers also welcomed new investments by Japanese companies and shared the view to strengthen economic relations.

Slovakia: Foreign Minister Motegi visited Warsaw in May and held a meeting with Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Ivan Korčok. The ministers welcomed new investment by Japanese companies and agreed to strengthen economic relations.

Czech Republic: Foreign Minister Motegi visited Warsaw in May and held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Jakub Kulháněk. The ministers signed the "Action Plan for Cooperation between Japan and the Czech Republic for the period of 2021-2025" and confirmed the strategic partnership between the two countries.



The Western Balkans

Although there still remains ethnic conflict, overall progress can be seen for stability and development in the Western Balkan region owing to each country's commitment to reforms toward EU membership. Prime Minister Abe visited Serbia in January 2018, the first visit ever by a Japanese Prime Minister. During the visit, he announced the "Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative" designed to advance cooperation with the Western Balkans (Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Montenegro), which aims for EU membership. Japan has promoted cooperation with the entire Western Balkan region in areas such as youth and economic exchanges. In April, as a collaborative project with the West Balkan Fund established by the governments of the West Balkans, participants from each West Balkan country participated online in the report on the "Impact of COVID-19 on sustainability of Civil Society Organizations in the Western Balkans Region." In May, Foreign Minister Motegi visited Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in July Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu and Montenegro Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapic visited Japan.

GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova)

GUAM was established by four countries of the former Soviet Union to promote democracy and stable economic development. Japan established the "GUAM+Japan" cooperation framework in 2007, and holds foreign minister-level and vice-minister-level meetings, as well as theme-based workshops with professionals and experts from GUAM countries, as a project to invite visitors to Japan. Japan places importance on ensuring that fundamental values take root in the international community through the stability and economic development of GUAM countries.

Slovenia: In April, Foreign Minister Motegi visited Slovenia, which will hold the EU Presidency in the second half of 2021, and met Minister for Foreign Affairs Anze Logar, and paid courtesy calls to President Borut Pahor and Prime Minister Janez Jansa. The two countries took the opportunity of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2022 to agree to develop relations in the areas of economic development, Society 5.0 and cybersecurity. They also agreed to cooperate toward integrating the Western Balkans into the EU under the "West Balkan Initiative."

Romania: Japan and Romania coordinated their efforts to sign a strategic partnership document in 2021, the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Bulgaria: Since 2018, Japan has promoted cooperation with Bulgaria under the "Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative." In November, Japan and Bulgaria co-hosted the second Western Balkans Workshop on Seismic Risk Challenges.

Croatia: With bilateral relations gaining momentum from the mutual visits of foreign ministers in 2019 and the telephone call between Foreign Minister Motegi and Minister for Foreign Affairs Gordan Grlic Radman in 2020, further progress in bilateral relations, including in the economic sector, is expected ahead of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2023.

Austria: Various events were held in both countries in 2019, the 150th anniversary of exchanges with Austria, and visits to Japan were made by Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and other officials. In September 2020, Prime Minister Abe held a telephone call with the Chancellor.

Switzerland: In July 2021, President Guy Parmelin visited Japan for the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2022 and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Suga. Also in July, a protocol to amend the tax treaty was signed, and a new Swiss Consulate in Osaka was established.

Greece: Japan continues to maintain stable and good relations after the 120th anniversary of the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation between Japan and Greece in 2019. Further strengthening of relations, including economic relations, is expected in the future.

Cyprus: Following the opening of the Embassy of Japan in Cyprus in January 2018, the Embassy of Cyprus in Tokyo was opened in September 2019. Further strengthening of relations is expected ahead of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2022.

100 Years of Friendship between Japan and the Baltic States

After World War I and against the backdrop of the Russian Revolution, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania declared independence from the Russian Empire, and became republic countries after international recognition. Japan recognized the then Estonia and Latvia in 1921 and Lithuania in 1922. 100 years later, Japan celebrated the 100th year anniversary of friendship with Estonia and Latvia in 2021, and with Lithuania in 2022, further developing the friendly relations between Japan and the Baltic states.



Cabinet decision of March 1, 1921, legal recognition of the Governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Georgia.

In 1929, a Japanese legation was established in the Latvian capital Riga, which played an important role for gathering information about the situation in Europe. In addition, a consulate was opened in Kaunas in Lithuania, where Vice-Consul Sugihara Chiune issued “Visas for Life” that saved the lives of many Jewish people during World War II. The Baltic states were subsequently annexed into the Soviet Union during World War II, but in 1990, they declared their independence or transition to independence from the Soviet Union. In the following year, 1991, Japan again recognized the current Baltic states, which became independent as the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia, and the Republic of Lithuania and established diplomatic relations with them. Since then, the Baltic states have played active roles in the international community as members of Europe, and they are important partners to Japan, sharing fundamental values. Bilateral relations have grown steadily and in 2007, Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress (of the time) visited the Baltic states, and in 2018, Prime Minister Abe made the first visit to the Baltic states by a Japanese Prime Minister.

In 2021, frequent high-level visits between Japan and the Baltic states took place. In January, Prime Minister Suga sent a video message to the “Centenary of the International de jure Recognition of the Republic of Latvia,” and in July, Foreign Minister Motegi made the first visit to the Baltic states by a Japanese Foreign Minister. In August, President Kaljulaid of Estonia and the wife of President Levits of Latvia respectively visited Japan on the occasion of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020. The meetings held on the occasion of these visits affirmed the friendly relations between Japan and the Baltic states, which is to celebrate



Foreign Minister Motegi planting a tree during his visit to Latvia with Minister of Foreign Affairs Rinkēvičs (center)

the 100th anniversary. Furthermore, both sides concurred on promoting cooperation on the common issues of the international community as like-minded countries, such as realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).”

Commemorative events between Japan and the Baltic states were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, however, some events were successfully held by adapting to the pandemic situation and taking appropriate infection control measures, such as a kimono exhibition in Estonia from June to November, and

an digital *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints) exhibition in Latvia from October to December. In addition, in November “The Edo Ukiyo-e Woodblock Prints” Webinar, Japan Brand Program, was held in the two countries.

The Baltic states have also been developing as European logistics hubs. Large-scale infrastructure projects are underway to strengthen integration with western Europe, and they are actively strengthening economic relations with Japan. The Government of Japan intends to provide support in order to contribute to strengthening the unity of Europe by promoting economic connectivity. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of friendship, we will further strengthen economic and cultural exchange to make the Baltic states become more familiar to the people of Japan.

A “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” and Japan’s Diplomacy with Europe

Amid the increasing severity of the security environment of East Asia and the growing uncertainty in the international community, in order to realize a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP),” strengthening cooperation with like-minded countries that share fundamental values has become extremely important. 2021 was the year in which Europe, who has not necessarily displayed a strong interest in the Indo-Pacific region due to the geographical distance, began to demonstrate its growing interest and engagement in the region.

Momentum has been growing for formulating independent strategies on the Indo-Pacific by the European Union (EU), following France, which holds territories in the South Pacific, and the Netherlands and Germany, which have strong historical and economic ties with Asia. Against this backdrop, Foreign Minister Motegi attended a meeting (in virtual format) of the EU Foreign Affairs Council in January. As the first Japanese foreign minister to attend the meeting, he explained Japan’s stance and initiatives on FOIP. Thereafter, the EU issued a Joint Communication on the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in September, clearly setting out its policy to cooperate with partners in the Indo-Pacific, including Japan. Furthermore, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended (in virtual format) the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, held in February 2022 and co-hosted by the EU and France, which held the presidency of the Council of the EU for the first half of the year. At the meeting, Foreign Minister Hayashi emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation with partners. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has also touched on expanding cooperation with Asia-Pacific partners, including Japan, in the outcome document of the NATO Summit held in June. These show that NATO is becoming a reassuring partner toward the realization of the FOIP vision.

In its strategy document titled “Global Britain in a Competitive Age,” published in March, the UK also set out policies aimed at deepening its engagement with the Indo-Pacific region.

Cooperation between Japan and Europe in the Indo-Pacific region covers a wide range of areas. The aforementioned Joint Communication published by the EU sets out a total of seven priority areas in which it will strengthen cooperation with partners, including Japan. This includes, for example, the digital sector, in addition to the green sector and connectivity, which Japan and the EU have already been cooperating on. Japan has also shared the view to advance cooperation with many European countries in areas such as response to COVID-19, climate change, digitalization, and economic security.

Particularly in the field of security, European countries have been demonstrating their firm policy of strengthening engagement with the Indo-Pacific, through concrete means such as deploying naval vessels to the region. France has deployed fleets repeatedly, held joint exercises with Japan and participated in the monitoring of illegal ship-to-ship transfers. In particular, when the training fleet “Jeanne d’Arc” called at Japan in May, a joint exercise was conducted with the participation of the U.S. and Australia. In relation to the UK, a carrier strike group, composed of the HMS “Queen Elizabeth” aircraft carrier and British, Dutch, and U.S. naval vessels, made a port call in Japan and conducted bilateral and multilateral joint exercises. This demonstrated the UK’s unwavering engagement with the region. Germany is also strengthening its engagement with the Indo-Pacific through the port call in Japan by the frigate “Bayern” and its participation in bilateral and multilateral exercises, as well as in the monitoring of illegal ship-to-ship transfers for the first time.

Amid significant changes to the balance in the international community, strengthening cooperation with European countries that share fundamental values with Japan, such as the rule of law, is becoming increasingly important toward the realization of FOIP, as well as in upholding and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law. Japan welcomes the greater interest and engagement in the Indo-Pacific shown by Europe in 2021. At the same time, Japan aims to continue working closely with the region to ensure that this interest and engagement remains steadfast.



Foreign Minister Motegi in attendance at the EU Foreign Affairs Council and explaining the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” vision (January)