<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. The importance of cooperation with the EU and European countries is further increasing as the existing international order is threatened and geopolitical competition intensifies, including with Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, and as international cooperation is required in addressing global issues such as countermeasures against the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

European countries pursue common policies across a wide range of fields such as diplomacy, 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.

<Russia’s Aggression Against Ukraine and Europe>

In response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine that began in February 2022, sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine became one of the most important issues for Europe. The EU and NATO member countries unanimously and strongly condemned Russia and imposed severe sanctions in rapid succession, including financial sanctions, travel bans on individuals and entities, and restrictions on imports and exports. The member countries have also expressed their unlimited solidarity with Ukraine, indicated their stance on spearheading international assistance ranging from military and humanitarian support to financial assistance, and have been implementing their assistance as necessary. In addition, in response to the large influx of Ukrainian evacuees mainly into Eastern European countries, assistance has also been provided to the countries surrounding Ukraine that are directly affected. Moreover, European leaders made declarations of solidarity one after the other, beginning with the visit to Kyiv by the prime ministers of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia (in March).

European countries hitherto had deeply interdependent relations with Russia centered on energy and economic aspects. However, European countries have changed direction toward reducing their dependence on Russia for energy, including Germany’s decision to suspend the approval process for the completed Russian natural gas pipeline “Nord Stream 2,” and many European companies have announced their withdrawal from Russian business.

EU and NATO member countries have been continuously implementing military support to Ukraine, which has lower military capabilities than Russia, while acting carefully to avoid becoming a direct party to the conflict. Such support has included modern equipment such as anti-tank missiles and multiple rocket launchers. Moves have been observed to further strengthen such support, including Germany’s decision on a policy of providing its Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine at the end of January 2023.

<Multilayered, Attentive Diplomacy with Europe>

In Europe, the importance of fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, and human rights, as well as the rule of law and compliance with international law, is being further recognized amidst the response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. On the other hand, a fine-tuned approach is required that takes into account the diversity of European countries and their respective circumstances. Japan
supports a strongly united Europe and conducts multilayered and tailored diplomacy for it. In 2022, despite the constraints of COVID-19, Japan has confirmed close cooperation with European countries through increased in-person visits by dignitaries and the use of teleconference meetings and telephone calls.

In particular, Prime Minister Kishida and Foreign Minister Hayashi respectively held summit meetings and foreign ministers’ meetings with various European countries by taking the opportunity of their in-person attendance at the Munich Security Conference (February), the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs (April), and the NATO Summit (June), as well as the G7 Elmau Summit (June) and the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meetings (May and November) held under the German presidency. They confirmed cooperation in responding to the situation in Ukraine, and exchanged views on global issues such as the realization of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP), climate change, and responding to COVID-19, as well as on the situation in East Asia. In addition, due to the increasingly complex international situation, 2022 was also a year of further deepening security and defense cooperation with European countries. The Sixth Japan-France Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting (“2+2”) was held online in January, an agreement in principle was reached on the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) in May, Eurofighter Typhoons and other German military aircrafts visited Japan in September, the second Japan-Germany Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting (“2+2”) was held in November, the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology was signed in December, and a mutual understanding on the joint development of next-generation fighter aircraft was reached by Japan, the United Kingdom, and Italy in December as well. In addition, during Prime Minister Kishida’s visit to Europe in January 2023, the Japan-UK RAA was signed, Japan-Italy relations were upgraded to “Strategic Partners,” and the Japan-Italy Political-Military Dialogue was launched.

During the year 2022, Prime Minister Kishida held in-person meetings with the leaders of Poland (March); Switzerland (April); Italy, Vatican, the UK, and Finland (May); Spain and Sweden (June); Ireland (July); the UK (September); and Lithuania and Luxembourg (October). He confirmed specific cooperation with the European countries during the meetings. With the Baltic States, Japan held the 3rd Japan-Baltic Cooperation Dialogue in October, the first time in three years. With the V4, Japan held the 11th “V4+Japan” Policy Dialogue in Tokyo in May, which was the first in-person meeting in four years. With the Western Balkan countries, Japan held the Inter-regional Conference “Promote culture of tolerance and mutual respect within the region” with participants from the Western Balkan countries in March, as well as summit meetings and ministerial meetings with North Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, and Serbia.

Furthermore, Japan conducts public diplomacy activities including dispatch of experts, cooperation with European think tanks, and Japan’s Friendship Ties Programs “MIRAI” for intellectual and people-to-people exchange that allows young people from Europe to visit Japan. These activities are aimed to promote the accurate picture of Japan and Asia and mutual understanding. 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.

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1 V4: Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary. For more information, see “Other European Regions” on page 146
2 Western Balkans: Albania, Northern Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro
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, 2022 was a year in which it had to respond to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In December 2021, following the escalation of tensions due to the buildup of Russian troops on the Russian-Ukrainian border, the EU began talks on a response, including sanctions against Russia. On February 22, an informal meeting of EU foreign ministers on sanctions against Russia was held, and the EU sanctions package against Russia was unanimously approved. The EU had been implementing economic sanctions against Russia since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and had continued to impose sanctions due to insufficient implementation of the Minsk agreements, which are peace agreements concerning the conflict in eastern Ukraine. However, following Russia's recognition of the "Donetsk People's Republic" and the "Luhansk People's Republic" as "independent states" on February 21 and the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on February 24, the EU implemented several rounds of sanctions from February, and announced the 9th sanctions package in December. As a result, the EU has implemented its most large-scale and extensive sanctions against Russia to date, including economic sanctions, asset freezes and travel restrictions on individuals and entities, diplomatic measures, restrictions on economic relations, and restrictions on the media. In addition, as support for Ukraine, the EU and EU member states are providing macro financial assistance in the form of macro financial support, budgetary support, emergency assistance, and crisis response and humanitarian assistance totaling 19.7 billion euros (of which approximately 12.4 billion euros is support from the EU). Besides this, the EU approved a macro financial assistance package totaling up to 18 billion euros for 2023, and began disbursement in January 2023. Furthermore, as its first military assistance, the EU decided to contribute a total of 3.6 billion euros to the European Peace Facility by January 2023. In solidarity with Ukraine, the EU has accepted and provided support to a considerable number of displaced Ukrainians in the EU region, including more than one million Ukrainian evacuees in Poland alone. In addition, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine submitted an application for Ukraine's accession to the EU in February, and talks to begin accession negotiations are taking place at an unusually rapid pace, with Ukraine being granted candidate country status in June. From the perspective of building a multilayered European framework, the first European Political Community Summit was held in October under the concept of setting up a middle stage between EU member states and non-member states. It was hosted by the Czech Republic, which held the EU Presidency in the second half of 2022, and invited 44 countries, including EU member states, candidate countries such as Ukraine, and neighboring EU countries such as the UK, which left the EU. It was decided to hold the Summit regularly going forward, rotating the host country between EU member and non-member states.

<Japan-EU Relations>
Japan and the EU are strengthening their cooperation under the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (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 2022, Prime Minister Kishida held the Japan-EU Summit with President Charles Michel of the European Council and President Ursula von der
Leyen of the European Commission. During the Summit in Tokyo, which was held in-person for the first time in three years, they exchanged views regarding international and regional affairs centered on Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, the situation in East Asia, and the situation in North Korea. They also exchanged views on global challenges such as FOIP, economic security, energy, and food security, as well as Japan-EU relations, and agreed on Japan-EU cooperation and collaboration in extensive fields. Furthermore, they issued a joint statement and decided to launch the Japan-EU Digital Partnership. In addition, Prime Minister Kishida also held summit meetings respectively with President Michel of the European Council and President von der Leyen of the European Commission on the occasion of the G7 Summit in Brussels, Belgium, in March and the G7 Summit in Elmau, Germany, in June. In November, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with President von der Leyen of the European Commission on the occasion of the G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia. In September, President Michel of the European Commission visited Japan to attend the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo, and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Kishida on this occasion as well.

In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi virtually attended the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific 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. Foreign Minister Hayashi also held Japan-EU Foreign Ministers’ Meetings with High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell on the occasion of the Munich Security Conference in Germany in February, the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Brussels, Belgium, in April, and the G7 Foreign Ministers Meeting in Munster, Germany, in November.

In addition, in March, the EU announced its Strategic Compass, a set of strategic guidelines for its security and defense policy for the next 10 years, which stipulates that the EU will further promote partnership with like-minded countries and strategic partners, including Japan. As confirmed by Summit leaders at the Japan-EU Summit, Japan and the EU will aim to expand substantive cooperation in fields such as cyber security, countering disinformation, maritime security, and crisis management.

The EU, with its economic 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. Japan and the EU have been effectively implementing and utilizing the agreement through the Joint Committee (which met most recently in March 2022) and specialized committees and working groups as stipulated in the agreement. In October, formal negotiations were launched on the inclusion of “provisions on the free flow of data” into the Japan-EU EPA. In the same month, the Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue was held, in which the two sides confirmed further cooperation on global economic issues, including economic security. Going forward, Japan will continue to aim to further develop Japan-EU economic relations, steadily implement the Japan-EU EPA, and conduct extensive Japan-EU cooperation.

Furthermore, the agreement in principle was reached for the Japan-EU Agreement on Bilateral Agreements between Japan and the Member States of the EU for Air Services during the fourth round of intergovernmental negotiations held on April 6. The Agreement will further strengthen cooperation between Japan and the EU in the field of aviation.

(2) United Kingdom

Following Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s announcement of his resignation in July, a Conservative Party leadership election was held from July to September, and Elizabeth Truss, who served as Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs as well as Minister for Women and Equalities in the previous administration, became the new Prime Minister. However, Prime Minister Truss announced her resignation in October following market turmoil triggered by economic policies such as large-scale tax
cuts. In the same month, Rishi Sunak, who served as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Johnson administration assumed the position of Prime Minister. While keeping economic stability as the top priority, he has been promoting initiatives that fulfill the Conservative Party’s promises made during the 2019 general election, including strengthening the health system, better education, “levelling up” the economy for all regions of the United Kingdom, and an economy that will benefit from leaving the EU.

In September, His Majesty King Charles III acceded to the throne following the demise of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

There was active dialogue between the governments of Japan and the UK at various levels, including the summit and foreign minister level. In addition to their telephone calls in February and July, Prime Minister Kishida met with Prime Minister Johnson during the G7 Summit in March and June, and during his visit to the UK in May. Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with Prime Minister Truss during the UN General Assembly in September. With Prime Minister Sunak, Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call in November, an informal talk during the G20 Bali Summit in the same month, and a meeting in January 2023. Foreign Minister Hayashi held a telephone call with then Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs as well as Minister for Women and Equalities Elizabeth Truss in April, and meetings with her on the margins of the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meetings in February and May. He also held a telephone call with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs James Cleverly in September as well as an informal talk with him at the UN General Assembly in the same month. They also met at the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo in the same month and at the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in November.

On each occasion, there was confirmation of further deepening of Japan-UK relations, which are closer than ever. There was also close communication on the G7’s united response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and on regional affairs, including East Asia.

During the January 2023 summit meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Sunak, the two leaders confirmed that they would continue to promote bilateral cooperation toward realizing FOIP as the UK upholds its Indo-Pacific “tilt,” and exchanged views on the G7 Hiroshima Summit, security, and regional affairs.

In the security field, Japan-UK cooperation has been raised to new heights, including the announcement of the joint development of next-generation fighter aircraft by the leaders of Japan, the UK, and Italy in December, and the signing of the Japan-UK RAA at the Japan-UK Summit Meeting in January 2023.

(3) France

President Emmanuel Macron entered the April presidential election with a high approval rating for an incumbent president due to his handling of COVID-19 and the situation in Ukraine. In the run-off (second round), which was the same face-off as the 2017 presidential election, President Macron was reelected despite the narrowing of the margin of votes between him and candidate Marine Le Pen of the National Rally, which is referred to as a far-right party. On the other hand, in the June National Assembly elections, the ruling coalition won less than a majority of seats.

With respect to external affairs, France held the EU Presidency in the first half of 2022, and continued to play a role in driving Europe’s engagement in the Indo-Pacific, including co-hosting the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum with the EU in February (Foreign Minister Hayashi participated in the meeting online). With regard to the situation in Ukraine, France implemented sanctions against Russia and provided assistance for Ukraine. President Macron visited Kyiv in June and had a series of telephone calls with President Vladimir Putin.
With regard to Japan-France relations, dialogues were held at various levels, including at the summit and foreign minister levels. In January, the Sixth Japan-France Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting (“2+2”) was held online, and a joint statement was issued confirming cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region and other such matters. In March, Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call with President Macron, and strongly condemned Russia due to its aggression against Ukraine. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian on the occasion of the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, and they agreed to promote concrete cooperation between Japan and France through various frameworks. In June, Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call with President Macron, and Foreign Minister Hayashi held a telephone call with newly appointed Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Catherine Colonna, confirming cooperation with the new French administration. Furthermore, in the same month, Prime Minister Kishida held an in-person meeting with President Macron during the G7 Elmau Summit, and also held a telephone call with him in July. Foreign Minister Hayashi held a telephone call with European and Foreign Affairs Minister Colonna in August, as well as an in-person meeting with her on the occasion of the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in November. During the meeting, the two foreign ministers confirmed the need for a united G7 response to the situation in Ukraine.

On January 1, 2023, Japan opened a consular office in Nouméa in New Caledonia, a French territory which is an important geopolitical point in the Indo-Pacific region. Prime Minister Kishida visited France in the same month. At the summit meeting and working dinner with President Macron during his visit, they concurred to aim to create a new roadmap for Japan and France, and exchanged views on the G7 Hiroshima Summit, security cooperation, and regional affairs.

(4) Germany

The three-party coalition government (the so-called “traffic light coalition”) consisting of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Green Party, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) has worked intensively to respond to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine since February 24. On February 27, Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) announced the establishment of a 100 billion euros special fund to strengthen the German armed forces (Bundeswehr) and a policy of increasing defense spending to 2% of GDP in the future. Subsequently, he also made a major policy shift from the previous foreign and security policy, including the provision of lethal weapons to Ukraine, a country in the conflict zone. Furthermore, the administration decided to extend the operation of the remaining three nuclear power plants, which were scheduled to cease operation at the end of 2022 in accordance with its policy of decommissioning nuclear power plants, until April 15, 2023. Moreover, in holding the G7 Presidency for 2022, Germany held G7 leaders’ meetings and foreign ministers’ meetings more frequently than in average years, contributed to the strengthening of G7 cooperation, and played an active role in the response to the situation over Ukraine, including by co-hosting with the European Commission the “International Expert Conference on the Recovery, Reconstruction and Modernisation of Ukraine” in October in Berlin. On the other hand, the administration has been criticized domestically for its cautious stance on support for Ukraine, including the provision of arms. Furthermore, against the backdrop of rising concerns about people’s lives due to soaring food and energy prices, the combined approval rating of the three ruling parties in public opinion polls has remained below 50% since the autumn of 2022. The future course of the administration operations will be a focus of attention.

With regard to Japan-Germany relations, in addition to the G7 process under Germany’s Presidency
in 2022, there were close high-level exchanges at an unprecedented frequency due to the series of visits to Japan by German dignitaries. From Japan, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Germany in February as well as May and November on the occasion of the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meetings. Prime Minister Kishida also visited Germany in June for the G7 Elmau Summit, and held a summit meeting with Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz on the occasion of the G20 Bali Summit in November. From Germany, Federal Chancellor Scholz visited Japan in April, Federal Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock visited Japan in July, and Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited Japan in November. They confirmed continued close cooperation on matters such as realizing FOIP and the response to the situation in Ukraine, further strengthening Japan-German relations as important partners that share fundamental values. Moreover, Japan and Germany are enhancing cooperation in the security field, including the visit of Eurofighter Typhoons and other German military aircrafts to Japan in September and the holding of the second Japan-Germany Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting (“2+2”) in November.

(5) Italy

Concerning domestic economic support measures in response to the impact of the situation in Ukraine, in July, the Five Star Movement (M5S), one part of the ruling coalition party, opposed part of the draft decree on the support measures, and was absent from the vote in Parliament. President of the Council of Ministers Mario Draghi, who had taken the position that his administration could not survive if even one party in the ruling coalition was absent, submitted his resignation to President Sergio Mattarella in response. President Mattarella asked President of the Council of Ministers Draghi to report the situation to Parliament, and a vote of confidence was held. However, since the three main ruling coalition parties, including Lega Nord and Forza Italia (FI) in addition to M5S, did not participate in the vote, President of the Council of Ministers Draghi submitted his resignation again, and President Mattarella decided to dissolve both the upper and lower houses of Parliament and hold elections.

In September, elections were held for members of the upper and lower houses, and the “center-right coalition” with the “Brothers of Italy (FdI)” as the leading party won a majority of seats. After consulting with the presidents of the upper and lower houses and representatives of the political parties, President Mattarella nominated FdI leader Giorgia Meloni to be President of the Council of Ministers, and she accepted. In October, Italy had its first ever female prime minister.

As for Japan-Italy relations, Prime Minister Kishida visited Italy in May and held a meeting with President of the Council of Ministers Draghi, in which they reaffirmed the unity of the international community, including the G7, with regard to international affairs, including the situation in Ukraine. In September, Prime Minister Kishida met with former President of the Council of Ministers Matteo Renzi, who visited Japan to attend the state funeral for the late Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. Furthermore, in November, Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call with President of the Council of Ministers Meloni to congratulate her on her inauguration. Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with newly appointed Vice President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Antonio Tajani during the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in November.

As for the security field, in December, there was an announcement on the joint development of next-generation fighter aircraft by Japan, the UK, and Italy. In January 2023, Prime Minister Kishida and President of the Council of Ministers Meloni agreed to upgrade Japan-Italy relations to a “Strategic Partnership” and to launch the Japan-Italy Political-Military Dialogue at a summit meeting. They also welcomed the accord in principle on the negotiations of the Italian-Japanese film Co-Production Agreement.
(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 key issue is managing the economy under the impact of high resource and energy prices.

In regard to Japan-Spain relations, the two countries are strengthening their cooperation under the strategic partnership concurred upon at the summit level in 2018. In June, Prime Minister Kishida attended the NATO Summit held in Madrid, where he held a meeting with Prime Minister Sánchez. The two leaders exchanged views on cooperation between companies in renewable energy, digital, and other fields, as well as on regional affairs including Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific. In the same month, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation José Manuel Albares on the occasion of the G20 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Bali. In October, the 22nd Japan-Spain Symposium was held in Kyoto and the Japan-Spain Vice-Ministerial-level Political Consultations were also held, advancing cooperation in both the public and private sectors.

(7) Poland
The coalition government 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. It has actively supported neighboring Ukraine in the wake of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. Since the start of that aggression, Poland has actively accepted Ukrainian evacuees.

In regard to Japan-Poland relations, in response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, Japan and Poland have been maintaining bilateral contact including a foreign ministers’ telephone call in February as well as a summit telephone call and summit meeting in March. In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Poland as a Special Envoy of Prime Minister Kishida. During his Foreign Ministers’ Meeting with Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau, the two ministers shared the view on continuing to maintain close cooperation as strategic partners to protect the free and open international order. Moreover, Foreign Minister Hayashi also paid courtesy calls to President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki. Foreign Minister Hayashi stated that Russia’s aggression against Ukraine is a serious situation that shakes the very foundation of the entire international order, and shared the view with the leaders that it is important for like-minded democracies to continue resolutely imposing sanctions against Russia in unity and solidarity. Foreign Minister Hayashi also visited the sites of the acceptance of displaced people, and returned to Japan on a government airplane together with 20 evacuees who wished to evacuate to Japan.

(8) Ukraine
(Reference: Special Feature “Russia’s Aggression Against Ukraine and Japan’s Response” on page 16)
Entering 2022, as the situation became even more tense with the buildup of Russian forces in the vicinity of the Ukrainian border, Japan continued its efforts to ease tensions together with the international community, including the Japan-Ukraine Summit Telephone Call on February 15, the Japan-Russia Summit Telephone Call on February 17, and the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on February 19.

On February 24, President Putin of Russia announced the start of a “special military operation,” and Russia’s aggression against Ukraine began. On the
same day, Japan issued a Statement by Foreign Minister Hayashi condemning this in the strongest terms. Furthermore, Japan held a Japan-Ukraine Foreign Ministers’ Telephone Call on February 25 and a Japan-Ukraine Summit Telephone Call on February 28, and conveyed that it would implement further sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine. Moreover, in response to Russia's attack on a nuclear power plant in Ukraine, another summit telephone call was held on March 4, and Prime Minister Kishida stated that Russia's brutal actions are absolutely unacceptable to Japan, which experienced the accident at TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station.

Japan and Ukraine have pursued close cooperation not only between their governments but also between their legislatures. On March 24, President Zelensky of Ukraine gave an online address to the Japanese Diet. Furthermore, on March 31, in order to show further solidarity with Ukraine, the Government of Japan announced that it would change its Japanese spelling of the Ukrainian capital to “キーウ” (in katakana, equivalent to the change from Kiev to Kyiv in English), based on the Ukrainian pronunciation, and that it would also change the spellings of place names other than the capital to match the Ukrainian pronunciations.

On April 2, Foreign Minister Hayashi, who was visiting Poland as a Special Envoy of Prime Minister Kishida, held an in-person foreign ministers’ meeting with Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba of Ukraine. On April 4, in response to the revelation that Russia had committed atrocities in the vicinity of Kyiv, including the mass killing of many civilians, a Statement by Foreign Minister Hayashi was issued condemning these acts. On April 26, a summit telephone call was held and Prime Minister Kishida conveyed that Japan would provide further support based on Ukraine's request. On May 13, during the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (Weissenhaus, Germany), Foreign Minister Hayashi held an in-person foreign ministers' meeting once again, in which both countries confirmed the importance of the international community, including the G7, uniting to continue strong sanctions against Russia. Moreover, Japan continued coordination for various responses based on the situation in close cooperation with the international community, including the G7, at meetings such as the G7 Elmau Summit in June.

On July 22, following the agreement among the UN, Turkey, Ukraine, and Russia to resume grain exports from Ukraine through the Black Sea, a Statement by Foreign Minister Hayashi was issued welcoming the agreement. Furthermore, on the following day, July 23, a Statement by Foreign Minister Hayashi was issued that strongly condemned the Russian attack on the port of Odesa. Moreover, on August 23, Prime Minister Kishida sent a video message at the Second Summit of Crimea Platform hosted by Ukraine.

During the UN General Assembly High-Level Week, Prime Minister Kishida held an in-person summit meeting with Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal of Ukraine on September 22. Furthermore, during a summit telephone call on September 30, Prime Minister Kishida stated that the purported “referenda” conducted in some areas of Ukraine as well as the purported “incorporation” of these areas by Russia shall never be recognized, and that Japan strongly condemns such moves. The Statement by Foreign Minister Hayashi with the same point was also issued on the same day.

Moreover, on October 5, the Embassy of Japan in Kyiv, which had been temporarily closed in March, was reopened with sufficient security measures in place. Since then, the Embassy has been actively gathering information and coordinating with various countries, including the Government of Ukraine.

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine is a unilateral attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force. It is an outrageous act that shocks the very foundation of the international order, not only in Europe but also in Asia, a clear violation of international law, and completely unacceptable. Japan will act in solidarity with Ukraine and unity with the international community, including the G7, in order to resolutely defend the international order.

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6 Ukraine announced an initiative in 2020 aimed at resolving various issues surrounding Crimea, which was illegally “annexed” by Russia in 2014, and held the first summit meeting (Kyiv, Ukraine) in August 2021.
Collaboration with European Regional Institutions, and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

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

NATO is an organization that aims at providing collective defense for its 30 member countries. In addition to defense for its 30 Western member countries, it 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 peoples of NATO member countries, including security management and counter-terrorism efforts.

The security environment in Europe has been changing as a result of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine since February, as shown by the fact that Finland and Sweden, which had been pursuing a policy of neutrality, applied for NATO memberships. Furthermore, with the existing international order under serious challenge, NATO’s interest in the Indo-Pacific region is growing based on the recognition that the security in Europe and the Indo-Pacific are inseparable, and cooperation between Japan and NATO has become even more important (see the Special Feature on page 140).

Amidst this situation, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in April as the first Japanese Foreign Minister to ever do so. He stated that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force will not be allowed in any region, and that he would like to strengthen cooperation between NATO and its partners in the Asia-Pacific, including Japan, toward realizing FOIP.

Moreover, Prime Minister Kishida attended the NATO Summit in June as the first Japanese Prime Minister to ever do so. During the Summit, he welcomed NATO’s expanded engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and expressed his desire to make progress in cooperation in fields such as cyber, emerging technologies, and maritime security. The new NATO Strategic Concept adopted at the Summit clearly states that the Indo-Pacific is a region that can directly affect Euro-Atlantic security, and that NATO will strengthen its dialogue to tackle cross-regional challenges and shared security interests.

In January 2023, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visited Japan for the first time in six years and issued a joint statement with Prime Minister Kishida, confirming that Japan-NATO cooperation will be taken to further heights in light of the current security environment. Moreover, during his meeting with Foreign Minister Hayashi, they also exchanged views on the situation in the Indo-Pacific region and shared the view to ensure close collaboration between Japan and NATO.

Japan and NATO have been advancing specific cooperation based on the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme (IPCP) (formulated in 2014, revised in May 2018 and June 2020). Japan has been contributing by participating in NATO’s Cyber Coalition, dispatching a female Self-Defense Forces (SDF) official to the NATO headquarters, and making contributions to the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Trust Fund. At the June meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg, it was confirmed that the IPCP will be upgraded to be more suitable for the new era and that the work will be accelerated toward an early agreement on a new document for cooperation.

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

The OSCE is a regional security organization with 57 participating States across Europe, the Central Asia and 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 controls in Afghanistan and...
Japan-NATO Relations Dramatically Growing in Importance

The year 2022 was a historic year that saw a dramatic increase in the importance of the relations between Japan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Russia's aggression against Ukraine that began in February showed anew that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific cannot be considered separately.

NATO is a group of like-minded countries that share the fundamental values of freedom and democracy, which Japan places importance on, and seeks to uphold the international order based on the rule of law. It is precisely because of the aforementioned international situation that cooperation with NATO is very important. Foreign Minister Hayashi was invited to attend the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Belgium in April, and became the first Japanese Foreign Minister in history to attend the meeting. In his speech, Foreign Minister Hayashi expressed that he would like to strengthen cooperation with NATO toward realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” in order to establish an international order based on the rule of law, and received strong approval from NATO and its member countries.

Prime Minister Kishida became the first Japanese Prime Minister to attend the NATO Summit held in Spain in June. In his speech, he touched on the importance of the international community uniting against unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force. He also expressed that he would like to encourage NATO to strengthen its involvement in the Indo-Pacific region, and to develop cooperation in the fields of cyber, emerging technologies, and maritime security. He also spoke of the importance of further unity between Japan and NATO, which are geographically distant from each other. Furthermore, NATO’s Strategic Concept was updated for the first time in about 12 years at this Summit, and for the first time clearly mentioned cooperation with the Indo-Pacific region. This was a sign that NATO itself recognizes the importance of cooperation with the Indo-Pacific region in ensuring the security of the North Atlantic and Europe. In addition to Prime Minister Kishida’s attendance at the Summit, NATO’s way of thinking has majorly changed, making the NATO Summit in June a historic meeting.

Moreover, in January 2023, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visited Japan for the first time in six years. He released a joint statement with Prime Minister Kishida, and confirmed that Japan-NATO cooperation will be taken to greater heights in light of the current security environment. Specifically, the leaders reaffirmed the importance of further advancing cooperation in cyber and other fields, as well as future cooperation in areas such as critical and emerging technologies, space, and disinformation, as the scope of security coverage expands. Furthermore, during the meeting with Foreign Minister Hayashi, NATO Secretary General exchanged views on the situation in the Indo-Pacific region and agreed on close cooperation between Japan and NATO.

Japan will continue to strengthen Japan-NATO relations, which are dramatically growing in importance within international situation, in order to realize FOIP and furthermore maintain and strengthen the international order based on the rule of law.
Central Asia, and also gives support for strengthening the capabilities of customs officials, conducting election monitoring, as well as to projects that promote women’s social advancement. Furthermore, the OSCE has been playing an important role in improving the situation in Ukraine even before Russia’s aggression began in February. Japan has been providing financial support and dispatching experts to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) (experts were dispatched intermittently since August 2015, and dispatches ended in February 2022).

The year 2022 marks 30 years of partnership between Japan and the OSCE, and the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group Meeting was held in July to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Japan-OSCE partnership. At the meeting, State Minister for Foreign Affairs SUZUKI Takako sent a video message, in which she touched on the importance of the international community cooperating together to address the situation at a historic juncture, and stated that Japan will continue to make efforts for realizing peacebuilding. Furthermore, Japan has been attending the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings every year. State Minister for Foreign Affairs TAKEI Shun'oku participated in the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting held in Poland in December. At the Council meeting, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Takei stated that on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Japan-OSCE partnership, Japan will communicate its contribution to the OSCE region, including Ukraine, and will continue to cooperate with the OSCE.

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

The CoE is an international organization comprising 46 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. Russia, which joined in 1996, was excluded on March 16 following its aggression against Ukraine. As the CoE’s sole observer country in Asia since 1996, Japan has contributed to the CoE by providing expertise and supporting the holding of meetings. In May, Japan signed the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime elaborated by the CoE. Furthermore, Japan participated in the plenary meeting of the Committee on AI (CAI), which aims to draft the world’s first AI treaty, and made a policy statement at the World Forum for Democracy in November. Moreover, Secretary General Marija Pejićinović Burić visited Japan in December to participate in the World Assembly for Women (WAW! 2022).

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

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

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is ASEM’s only permanent institution. It is located in Singapore and is responsible for activities in the field of society and culture, one of the three pillars.

Japan has supported the ASEF with its project stockpiling medical personal protective equipment (PPE) and antiviral drugs to combat infectious diseases, and cooperated in the emergency transportation of stockpiled supplies to ASEM partners, and the implementation of capacity building workshops for emergency response and public health network projects. In September, ASEF stockpiles were provided to Mongolia, and in October, a high-level meeting on risk communication for public health emergencies was held in the UK. Furthermore, under the ASEF’s Project for Strengthening Preparedness and Response to the COVID-19 and other Emerging Infectious Diseases, financially contributed to by Japan, drugs, PPE, medical devices and other items to combat infectious diseases were provided through the World Health Organization (WHO) to Ukraine and its neighboring countries accepting Ukrainian displaced persons (ASEM partners: Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and Czech Republic; non-ASEM partner: Moldova).

In addition, Japan contributed to the ASEF’s activities including through the implementation of ASEF Classroom Network online projects (September through December) as a co-host and its financial contributions to the ASEF.
The international community is now facing a historic shift in the power balance and intensifying geopolitical competition. As some countries can be seen attempting to change the existing international order based on their own historical views and values, it is important for Japan and European countries, which are closely connected with fundamental values and principles, to promote security and defense cooperation transcending the geographic distance between them.

In 2021, there was progress in concrete cooperation between Japan and European countries in the Indo-Pacific. This included port calls in Japan by the French training fleet Jeanne d’Arc, the UK carrier strike group centered on the UK’s aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, and the German naval frigate Bayern, and the implementation of bilateral and multilateral exercises.

In February 2022, the start of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine majorly shocked the international community. The clear violation of the principle of refraining from the use of force, which lies at the heart of the postwar international legal order, by Russia, which is one of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, shook confidence in the international order based on the rule of law to its very foundations.

In the face of unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, Japan and European countries have again come to the strong recognition that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific are inseparable, and have taken a step toward further strengthening security cooperation. In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi became the first Japanese Foreign Minister to attend the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and in June, Prime Minister Kishida became the first Japanese Prime Minister in history to attend the NATO Summit Meeting. During the meetings, they shared global security perceptions with NATO and the partner countries and organizations, and concurred to promote concrete cooperation. In October, Japan and Lithuania issued the Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, and newly launched the Japan-Lithuania security policy dialogue. In November, Japan held the second Japan-Germany Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting (“2+2”) and confirmed the direction of specific cooperation between the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the German Federal Armed Forces. In December, Japan signed the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, and also reached a mutual understanding with Italy and the UK on the joint development of next-generation fighter aircraft. This joint development is significant for accelerating the advanced military capability and technological advantage of the three countries, deepening defense co-operation, science and technology collaboration, integrated supply chains, and further strengthening the defense industrial base among these countries.

The National Security Strategy formulated by the Government of Japan in December reiterated that Japan will enhance security cooperation with European countries, NATO, EU and others in order to build a multilayered network among its ally and like-minded countries, to expand it, and to strengthen deterrence.

In January 2023, Prime Minister Kishida visited France, Italy, and the UK and held meetings with the leaders of these countries. With the UK, Prime Minister Kishida signed the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), which facilitates cooperative activities such as joint exercises and disaster relief between the SDF and the UK Armed Forces. The Japan-UK RAA provides a new legal basis to contribute to more frequent, large-scale, and complex cooperative activities. Furthermore, at the Japan-France Summit Meeting, Prime Minister Kishida welcomed the progress in substantive cooperation, such as reciprocal visits of assets and joint exercises between the two countries, and concurred to deepen bilateral cooperation. Furthermore, with Italy, the two leaders concurred to upgrade Japan-Italy relations to that of “Strategic Partners,” and also confirmed promotion of further cooperation in the security field by launching consultations between the foreign affairs and defense authorities. At the end of the same month, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who visited Japan for the first time in six years, and Prime Minister Kishida released a joint statement and concurred to elevate Japan-NATO relations to new heights.

As partners sharing fundamental values, Japan will continue to further strengthen security and defense cooperation with European countries in order to maintain and expand the free, open, and stable international order.
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Furthermore, at the Japan-France Summit Meeting, Prime Minister Kishida welcomed the progress in substantive cooperation. The two leaders also confirmed promotion of further cooperation in the security field. In December, Japan signed the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, and also reached a mutual understanding with Sweden. These agreements are expected to contribute to regional security and stability.

In December, Japan held the second Japan-Germany Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting ("2+2") and confirmed the strong recognition that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific are inseparable, and have taken a step toward further strengthening security and defense cooperation with European countries. In the face of unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, Japan and European countries have again come to attend the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and in June, Prime Minister Kishida became the first Japanese Prime Minister to lead the operation, such as reciprocal visits of assets and joint exercises between the two countries, and concurred to deepen bilateral cooperation.

Throughout the year, Prime Minister Kishida actively engaged in talks with European leaders and participated in various regional security dialogues. At the Japan-France Summit Meeting, he welcomed the progress in substantive cooperation. In the second Japan-Germany Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting, he confirmed the strong recognition that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific are inseparable. These efforts demonstrate Japan’s commitment to fostering security and defense cooperation with European countries.

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Moreover, Japan has continued to build strategic partnerships with European countries. At the Japan-France Summit Meeting, Prime Minister Kishida welcomed the progress in substantive cooperation. In the second Japan-Germany Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting, he confirmed the strong recognition that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific are inseparable. These efforts demonstrate Japan’s commitment to fostering security and defense cooperation with European countries.

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Other European Regions

Nordic countries
- **Iceland**: In December, Prime Minister Kishida met with President Gudni Thorlacius Johannesson, who was visiting Japan to give a keynote speech at the World Assembly for Women (WAW! 2022), and both leaders affirmed they would continue to cooperate on the Arctic issues and on the sustainable use of marine living resources.
- **Sweden**: In June, Prime Minister Kishida, who visited Spain to attend a NATO summit meeting, held a meeting with Prime Minister of Sweden Magdalena Andersson and affirmed to further strengthen relations with Sweden, a partner with which Japan shares fundamental values. In December, the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of Sweden concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology was signed and a Foreign Ministers’ telephone call was held.
- **Denmark**: In April, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Suzuki held talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Culture of the Faroe Islands Jénís áv Rana, who was visiting Japan, and signed the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Faroe Islands.
- **Norway**: Foreign Minister Hayashi held a video conference with Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt in March, and another meeting in September during her visit to Japan to attend the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo, where the two foreign ministers agreed to explore the possibility of cooperation for further development of the bilateral relations.
- **Finland**: In May, Prime Minister Kishida held a Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Sanna Marin, who was visiting Japan. At the meeting, the two leaders exchanged views on bilateral relations and regional affairs, and signed the Japan-Finland Working Holiday Agreement. In September, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Pekka Haavisto, who was visiting Japan to attend the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo.

Benelux countries
- **The Netherlands**: In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a telephone call with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra. Furthermore, in July and November, Foreign Minister Hayashi also held a meeting with the same Dutch Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and the two Ministers affirmed to strengthen cooperation toward the realization of FOIP. In November, the Japan-Netherlands Peace Exchange Programme was held for the first time in three years.
- **Belgium**: In December, Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid led the Belgium Economic Mission to Japan, where Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with her. Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Sophie Wilmes in April, and held a telephone call and in-person meeting with newly appointed Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib in September. Foreign Minister Hayashi also met with Foreign Minister Lahbib in December, where the two Ministers confirmed that they would cooperate on the realization of FOIP and the regional situation.
- **Luxembourg**: Prime Minister Xavier Bettel visited Japan in October following his attendance at the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo in September. Prime Minister Kishida met with Prime Minister Bettel and reaffirmed that they would cooperate on the realization of FOIP and the regional situation.

Baltic countries
- **Estonia**: In September, Prime Minister Kishida held talks with President Jüri Ratas of the Parliament, who was visiting Japan to attend the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo. In October, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs YOSHIIKAWA Yuumi visited Estonia and paid a courtesy call to Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu. The Parliamentary Vice-Minister also attended the 3rd Japan-Baltic Cooperation Dialogue, where the heads of delegations shared the view to continue to promote cooperation between Japan and the three Baltic countries.
- **Latvia**: In October, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa visited Latvia and met with Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs, where they shared the view to strengthen cooperation between Japan and NATO and bilateral economic relations. The Parliamentary Vice-Minister also signed the Agreement Between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Latvia Regarding a Working Holiday Scheme with Minister of the Interior Kristaps Eižons.
- **Lithuania**: In June, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Suzuki held a meeting with Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, who was visiting Japan. In August, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a telephone call with Foreign Minister Landsbergis. In October, Prime Minister Kishida met with Prime Minister Ingrida Simonytė, who was visiting Japan, and the two leaders issued the Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. In December, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Japan-Lithuania friendship, Foreign Minister Hayashi exchanged letters with Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Friendship between the two countries.
Ireland: In July, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with Prime Minister Micheál Martin, who was visiting Japan, and the two leaders shared the view to further develop bilateral relations, such as revitalizing economic relations in the green and digital sectors, and promoting people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. They also issued a joint leaders’ statement.

Andorra: In January 2023, a cabinet reshuffle took place and Foreign Minister Maria Ubach Font remained in office.

San Marino: As heads of state of San Marino, Captains Regent Oscar Mina and Paolo Rondelli took office in April, followed by Captains Regent Maria Luisa Berti and Manuel Ciavatta in October.

Vatican: In May, Prime Minister Kishida visited Vatican, had an audience with His Holiness Pope Francis, and held talks with Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin. On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Holy See, in addition to strengthening bilateral relations, the two leaders shared the view that they would cooperate to address various issues common to all humankind, including efforts toward “a world without nuclear weapons.”

Portugal: In June, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Suzuki met with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Francisco André, who was visiting Japan. In July, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs MIYAKE Shingo visited Portugal to attend the Second UN Ocean Conference and also met with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation André.

Malta: In September, Foreign Minister Hayashi held talks with Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade Ian Borg during the UN General Assembly, where he shared the view to strengthen cooperation in a wider range of areas with Malta, which, along with Japan, serves as non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council from 2023. Also in the same month, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade Borg visited Japan to attend the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo. Furthermore, the Embassy of Japan in Malta is scheduled to be established in FY2023, and that will create an environment for building even closer relations and promoting cooperation between Japan and Malta.

Monaco: In September, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Monaco to Japan Didier Gamerdinger arrived in Japan and paid a courtesy call to Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa.
Bilateral relations between Japan and the V4 countries of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary have a long history and are traditionally friendly. Cooperation with the V4, which are neighboring countries of Ukraine and share fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, rule of law, and human rights, is important. The 11th “V4+Japan” policy dialogue was held in May, where leaders reaffirmed strengthening cooperation in a wide range of fields.

**Slovakia (V4 chair from July):** In July, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Suzuki and State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Ingrid Brockova held talks in Switzerland to create a support framework for Ukrainian refugees and reconstruction, and confirmed cooperation in regional affairs.

**Czech Republic:** State Minister for Foreign Affairs Suzuki held a meeting with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Jiří Kozák in Switzerland in July, and Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský in September during High-Level Week of the UN General Assembly. Face-to-face diplomacy with the Czech Republic, which held the presidency of the EU during the second half of 2022, has become more active, with Jan Skopeček, Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic attending the state funeral for late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo in September and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Kozák visiting Japan in November.

**Poland:** “See Section 5 Europe 2 (7) Poland on page 137.

**Hungary:** In December, Minister of the Prime Minister’s Office Gergely Gulyás, visited Japan and held talks with Chief Cabinet Secretary MATSUNO Hirokazu and Foreign Minister Hayashi. They exchanged views on the response to the situation in Ukraine and regional situations such as China and North Korea, and confirmed the importance of maintaining international order based on the rule of law.
The Western Balkans

Although there still remains ethnic conflicts in the Western Balkans region, such as lingering tensions between Serbia and Kosovo, overall progress can be seen for stability and development in the Western Balkan region as each country is engaging in reforms toward EU membership. As part of the “Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative” (Note), in March, as a collaborative project with the Western Balkan Fund established by the governments of the Western Balkans, an inter-regional conference entitled “Promote Culture of Tolerance and Mutual Respect within the Region” was held with participants from each West Balkan country. Moreover, an online youth exchange was held under the theme of peacebuilding as a cooperation project with the Western Balkans Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO). Active high-level dialogue was also realized under the same initiative. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi held talks with Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani of North Macedonia during his visit to Japan and with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Olta Xhaçka of Albania during the UN General Assembly High-Level Week in September. In September, Prime Minister Kishida held talks with both Prime Minister Albin Kurti of Kosovo and Prime Minister Ana Brnabic of Serbia, who visited Japan to attend the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo.

Note: In January 2018, Prime Minister Abe became the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit Serbia, where he announced the “Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative” to advance cooperation with the Western Balkan countries (Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Montenegro) on their path to join the EU, and promoted cooperation with the entire Western Balkan region in areas such as youth exchanges and economic exchanges.

Slovenia: In March, Prime Minister Kishida and Foreign Minister Hayashi exchanged commemorative letters to celebrate the establishment of diplomatic relations with their respective counterparts, Prime Minister Janez Jansa and Foreign Minister Anze Logar. Foreign Minister Hayashi also held a telephone call with and Foreign Minister Logar.

Romania: In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Bogdan Aurescu during the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Germany. In September, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Nicolae-Ionel Ciucu, who visited Japan to attend the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo.

Bulgaria: Since 2018, when the first ever visit to Bulgaria by a Japanese Prime Minister was realized, bilateral cooperation has expanded into new areas under the “Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative,” and Japan promotes support to the Western Balkans in cooperation with Bulgaria in areas such as disaster prevention and the promotion of small- and medium-sized business.

Croatia: The Government of Japan and Croatia reached an agreement in principle on the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Croatia for Air Services in November with a view toward the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2023 and expectations of further progress in bilateral relations, including in the economic field.

Austria: In September, consultations between authorities toward concluding a social security agreement were upgraded to government-to-government consultations, and, in December, the 24th meeting of the “Japan-Austria Committee for Issues of the Future” was held in-person for the first time in three years.

Switzerland: In April, President and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Ignazio Cassis visited Japan, where he held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Kishida and a Foreign Ministers’ Meeting with Foreign Minister Hayashi. In October, an Honorary Consulate of Switzerland was established in Fukuoka, and in November, the “Protocol Amending the Convention between Japan and Switzerland for the Avoidance of Double Taxation with respect to Taxes on Income” entered into force.

Greece: Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias visited Japan in April and had a meeting with Foreign Minister Hayashi.

Cyprus: In 2022, Japan and Cyprus celebrated the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. President of the House of Representatives Anntia Demetriou attended the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo. Japan-Cyprus political consultation was also held, and bilateral exchanges at various levels were vitalized.

Moldova: Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita in September and President Maia Sandu visited Japan in December to attend the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo and to participate in the World Assembly for Women (WAW! 2022) respectively, and they also held a separate summit meeting with Prime Minister Kishida.
Moldova’s Progress Toward European Integration

Moldova is one of the countries of the former Soviet Union. It borders Ukraine to the east and Romania, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union, to the west. Although Russian, which was the official language during the Soviet era, is also widely spoken in Moldova, the national language is Romanian due to the strong historical ties with Romania. Moldova became an independent country with the collapse of the former Soviet Union, but since its independence in 1989, public opinion has been divided between pro-Russia and pro-EU groups. President Igor Dodon, who served as president until 2020, was in the pro-Russia group. However, candidate Maia Sandu, who is pro-EU and anti-corruption, won the presidential election in November of the same year. In the subsequent general election held in July 2021, the Action and Solidarity Party founded by President Sandu won a working majority.

President Sandu had once served as Prime Minister in 2019. However, the pro-EU party was not a monolith, and she resigned after only five months in office back then. Thus, the results of the presidential and general elections were a long-awaited achievement for the pro-EU group led by President Sandu.

However, President Sandu and her party have since suffered hardships. First, there was the increased burden on public finances caused by COVID-19. Russia’s aggression against neighboring Ukraine, which was launched in February 2022, reduced migrant labor to Russia, which until then had been an important source of income, as well as exports to the Russian and Ukrainian markets. Furthermore, Moldova depends on Russia for almost 100% of its natural gas imports. Although a gas contract with Russia was concluded after difficult negotiations, gas prices were more than six times higher as of September than in the same period a year earlier, and supplies have also been declining. Moldova’s main power plant is located in Transnistria, an area where Russian troops are stationed and where the Government of Moldova has no effective control, and the power supply from this plant has also been reduced. Furthermore, there has been a massive influx of Ukrainian displaced persons, who account for more than 20% of the population of Moldova. This has resulted in a year-on-year inflation rate of more than 30% following Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.

Despite facing these domestic difficulties, the Government of Moldova has maintained its course of European integration, and the international community has announced its support for the country one after another. In addition to Ukraine, Japan has also announced a variety of emergency humanitarian aid to Ukraine’s neighboring countries, such as Moldova, including via Japanese NGOs through Japan Platform (JPF). A survey team was dispatched to Moldova to coordinate activities among emergency medical teams of various countries, assist with medical data management, and assess needs in the healthcare sector and other fields. Subsequently, based on the survey team’s report, Japan decided to provide grant aid of up to one billion Japanese yen in the field of healthcare to alleviate the burden on the healthcare system caused by the influx of displaced persons. Furthermore, to show solidarity with Moldova, Japan changed its spelling of the capital of Moldova in Japanese from “Kishinev,” which is based on the Russian language, to “Chișinău,” which is based on the Romanian language.

Moldova applied for EU membership in March 2022, after Ukraine, and was granted EU candidate status with Ukraine in June. However, the road to accession to the EU is not smooth, with some countries taking more than 10 years to actually join.

Moldova, a country that neighbors Ukraine and has been at the mercy of history, is now on its way to accession to the EU based on fundamental values such as democracy and peace. As a responsible member of the international community, Japan is expected to be involved in providing assistance to Moldova, which has suffered the effects of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine in a striking way.