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## Europe

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## 1 Overview

## &lt;The Importance of Cooperation with Europe, with which Japan Shares Values and Principles&gt;

The European Union (EU) and European countries are important partners for Japan, sharing values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. It is becoming even more important to strengthen cooperation with the EU and European countries under the recognition that the security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable in order to respond to challenges to the values and principles to which Japan and Europe attach importance and to defend the free and open international order based on the rule of law in the midst of intensifying geopolitical competition that threatens the existing international order, such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In addition, the need for international coordination in addressing global issues such as climate change and infectious diseases has further increased the need for cooperation with the EU and European countries.

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 also important for enhancing Japan's presence and influence in the international community.

## &lt;Russia's Aggression Against Ukraine and Europe&gt;

In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine that began in February 2022, severe sanctions against Russia and strong support for Ukraine were continued in 2023. As the holder of the G7 Presidency, Japan showed its leadership to ensure that the G7 unify in promoting severe sanctions against Russia and strong support for Ukraine to stop Russia's aggression against Ukraine as soon as possible. In addition, Japan has shown its solidarity with Ukraine at various levels, including the summit and foreign minister levels, such as Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Kyiv in March, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to Japan to attend the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, and the G7 Leaders' Video Conference in December, and has closely cooperated with Ukraine to provide support tailored to the Ukrainian people.

In Europe, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has become one of the most important issues, leading to sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine. The EU, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),<sup>1</sup> and various countries have been united in strongly condemning Russia. They have imposed severe sanctions against Russia, including financial sanctions, travel bans on individuals and entities and restrictions on imports and exports, and are continuing their solidarity with and support for Ukraine.

For example, the EU provides economic assistance such as macrofinancial assistance, defense equipment support through the European Peace Facility,<sup>2</sup> and training of Ukrainian soldiers through the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine).<sup>3</sup> NATO is also working on creating a

<sup>1</sup> NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization. For more information, see the MOFA website for details: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/nato/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> European Peace Facility: System established in March 2021 to enable the EU to finance military or defense activities under the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and to enhance the EU's capacity for conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and strengthening international security.

<sup>3</sup> EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine): A military mission established by the EU in October 2022 to support Ukraine. It provides training to the Ukraine military.



multi-year plan to assist Ukraine and has stated that it will extend an invitation to Ukraine to join NATO if its member countries agree and conditions are met. The United Kingdom (UK) has provided a total of 9.3 billion UK pounds in military, humanitarian, and economic assistance, including the provision of “Challenger 2” tanks, and hosted a conference on Ukraine’s reconstruction in June. France has provided humanitarian and economic assistance in addition to military aid totaling 3.2 billion euros, including the provision of cruise missiles and armored and light combat vehicles. Germany decided in January to provide Ukraine with Leopard 2 battle tanks, and has provided military, humanitarian, and economic assistance totaling 24 billion euros.

### <Multilayered, Attentive Diplomacy with Europe>

In Europe, the need for values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, as well as compliance with the rule of law and 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 2023, with the resumption of in-person visits by dignitaries which had previously been constrained by COVID-19, Japan confirmed close cooperation with European countries, the EU, NATO, and others by actively conducting meetings taking the opportunities presented by visits to Europe by the Prime Minister and ministers, as well as visits to Japan by dignitaries.

In January, Prime Minister Kishida visited France, Italy, and the UK and held meetings with the leaders of these countries, confirming the maintenance and strengthening of the free and open international order, and the strengthening of cooperation in the security field. In addition, in July, Prime Minister Kishida attended the NATO Summit Meeting in Lithuania, as he had done the previous year. He shared with the leaders of various countries the recognition that the security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable. Next, Prime Minister Kishida visited Brussels, where he held the 29th Japan-EU Summit Meeting and confirmed

close cooperation for maintaining and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

During the year 2023, Prime Minister Kishida confirmed cooperation with various European countries through means such as holding meetings with the leaders of Albania, Italy, Ukraine, the UK, the Netherlands, Greece, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Norway, France, Belgium, Poland, Lithuania, and Romania.

Cooperation was also deepened in the security field. Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the Munich Security Conference (February) and the Seventh Japan-France Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting (“2+2”) (May). Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended the Fifth Japan-UK Foreign and Defence Ministers’ Meeting (“2+2”) (November).

With regard to the legal framework in the security field, the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) was signed in January and entered into force in October. In addition, there was an agreement in principle in November on the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Germany ACSA).

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. Japan is working to strengthen multilayered relations with Europe by sharing information and exchanging views with European countries, organizations, and experts in a wide range of fields, including politics, security, economics, and business.

## 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 448 million. It is a strategic partner of Japan that works together to uphold and strengthen the free and open

international order based on the rule of law, and to address the common challenges of the international community.

#### <Recent Developments of the EU>

In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the EU has adopted 12 sanctions packages against Russia since February 2022. These sanctions include asset freezes and travel restrictions on more than 1,900 individuals and entities; economic sanctions in the services field, including finance, transportation, energy, defense, and raw materials; and restrictions on the media. For the 12th sanctions package announced at the European Council meeting in December 2023, it was decided to take measures including the designation of additional entities, the addition of items subject to import and export bans such as an import ban on Russian diamonds, and the strengthening of the implementation of the oil price cap. In addition, the EU and EU member states have provided support to Ukraine in the form of macro-financial assistance, budgetary support, emergency assistance, and crisis response and humanitarian assistance, totaling approximately 40.5 billion euros (of which approximately 31 billion euros was support from the EU) (as of November 2023). In February 2024, the European Council decided to provide up to 50 billion euros in financial assistance from 2024 to 2027. Furthermore, the EU and EU member states have provided military assistance totaling over 27 billion euros. Within this total, the EU is providing assistance in the form of lethal military equipment for defensive purposes to the Ukrainian military through the European Peace Facility, as well as conducting training for 40,000 Ukrainian troops through EUMAM Ukraine, which was launched in November 2022. President Charles Michel of the European Council and President Ursula von der Leyen of the European Commission visited Kyiv in February for the 24th EU-Ukraine Summit and stated that support for Ukraine would be continued as long as necessary. With regard to Ukraine's accession to the EU, in December the European Council decided to commence negotiations on accession by Ukraine.

In addition, in response to the armed conflict between Israel and Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups since October 7, the European Commission



The 29th Japan-EU Summit Meeting (July 13, Brussels, Belgium; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

decided in November to increase humanitarian assistance to Palestine to over 100 million euros.

#### <EU-China Relations>

President Michel of the European Council and President von der Leyen of the European Commission visited China in December and attended the 24th EU-China Summit in Beijing.

#### <Japan-EU Relations>

Japan and the EU are strengthening their cooperation under the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (Japan-EU EPA), which entered into force in 2019, and the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement (Japan-EU SPA), of which provisional application started at the same time. In July, Prime Minister Kishida visited Brussels, Belgium for the 29th Japan-EU Summit Meeting with President Michel of the European Council and President von der Leyen of the European Commission. During the Summit, the leaders of Japan and the EU exchanged views on international and regional affairs, centered on Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the situation in East Asia, and North Korea, as well as security, economic security, digital partnerships, and green energy, and concurred on Japan-EU cooperation in a wide range of fields. They also welcomed the EU's decision to lift import restrictions on Japanese food products and announced the launch of a foreign ministers' strategic dialogue to take cooperation in the security field to a new level.

Prime Minister Kishida conducted telephone calls with President von der Leyen of the European Commission in March, June, and October. He also

participated in the Global Gateway Forum<sup>4</sup> held by the European Commission in October by sending a video message.

In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum co-hosted by the EU and Sweden, which held the EU Presidency in the first half of 2023. He stated that the security of Europe and that of the Indo-Pacific cannot be discussed separately, and that it is important for like-minded countries to maintain unity beyond regional boundaries in order to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law. In addition, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a Japan-EU Foreign Ministers' Meeting with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell Fontelles during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Brussels, Belgium in April, and Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Japan-EU Foreign Ministers' Meeting with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Borrell during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Tokyo, Japan in November.

The EU, with its economic scale that follows the United States (U.S.) and China, is an important economic partner of Japan, ranking fourth among Japan's import partners, third among export partners, and second in terms of the balance of direct investment in Japan.

The Japan-EU EPA, which entered into force in 2019, created a massive economic zone accounting for approximately 20% of the global GDP, under which the ties between Japan and the EU have further strengthened. Steady implementation and operation of the agreement in various fields have been ensured through the Japan-EU EPA Joint Committee (a meeting was held in April 2023 between Foreign Minister Hayashi and Executive Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis of the European Commission) as well as specialized committees and working groups. Furthermore, in June, as a framework for promoting a broader strategic partnership with the EU, Foreign Minister Hayashi, together with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry NISHIMURA Yasutoshi and Executive Vice President Dombrovskis of the European Commission, held the Japan-EU High-Level



Foreign Minister Hayashi attends the Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue (online format) (June 27, Tokyo)

Economic Dialogue and confirmed that Japan and the EU will further cooperate with regard to Japan-EU economic policy collaboration, economic security, and the rules-based free and fair trade framework. In addition, in October, during the G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting in Osaka-Sakai, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, together with Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry Nishimura and Executive Vice President Dombrovskis of the European Commission, held the Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue for the second time that year. They confirmed that an agreement in principle had been reached on the negotiations on the inclusion of provisions on the free flow of data into the Japan-EU EPA and confirmed their intention to accelerate the work toward an early signing. Furthermore, the participants also exchanged views on the most recent pending issues, such as addressing economic coercion, building resilient supply chains, and export control, and confirmed the importance of cooperation among the G7 and like-minded countries. Going forward, Japan will continue to ensure the steady implementation of the Japan-EU EPA and leverage other dialogue frameworks, including the Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue, with the aim of further developing Japan-EU economic relations. Furthermore, the Japan-EU Agreement on Bilateral Agreements between Japan and the Member States of the EU for Air Services, which lays the foundation for stable development of Japan-EU air services, was signed in February and entered into force on October 1.

<sup>4</sup> Global Gateway: In December 2021, the EU announced the Global Gateway, a new connectivity strategy for infrastructure development investment, to address the lack of funding for sustainable development around the world.



## (2) United Kingdom

In January, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced his policy to promote efforts to achieve five commitments (halving inflation by 2023, economic growth, reducing government debt, improving the National Health Service, and taking measures against illegal immigration) in his address at the beginning of the year. In February, Prime Minister Sunak and President von der Leyen of the European Commission announced a new agreement (the Windsor Framework) on the Northern Ireland Protocol, which forms part of the UK's agreement for withdrawing from the EU, including simplification of procedures for the transport of goods between the UK mainland and Northern Ireland. This was positioned as a turning point in UK-EU cooperative relations, which had been difficult since the UK's withdrawal from the EU (Brexit). In March, the Government of the UK announced the Integrated Review Refresh, endorsed the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" vision, said that the UK had achieved its Indo-Pacific "tilt," and positioned engagement with the region as a permanent pillar of UK international policy.

There was an active dialogue between the governments of Japan and the UK at various levels, including the summit and foreign minister levels. Prime Minister Kishida visited the UK in January and held a meeting with Prime Minister Sunak, during which the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) was signed (and subsequently entered into force in October). In addition, during the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, the two leaders also held a Japan-UK Summit Meeting and issued The Hiroshima Accord: an Enhanced Japan-UK Global Strategic Partnership.

At the foreign minister level, Foreign Minister Hayashi and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs James Cleverly conducted a telephone call in March, an informal talk during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in April, and meetings during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Karuizawa, Nagano in the same month and the Ukraine Recovery Conference in the UK in June. Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Cleverly held a meeting during the United Nations (UN) General Assembly meeting in



Japan-UK Summit Meeting (May 18, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

September, and a telephone call in October. During the G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting in November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Defense Minister KIHARA Minoru held the Fifth Japan-UK Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting ("2+2"), the first such "2+2" meeting to be held in about two years and nine months, with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Cleverly and Secretary of State for Defence Grant Shapps. Additionally, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Cleverly signed a memorandum of cooperation between Japan and the UK on people-to-people exchanges, and confirmed that the two countries would promote people-to-people exchanges in various fields, including youth exchanges. Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs David Cameron in November.

## (3) France

In February, demonstrations against the pension reform bill proposed by the Government of France were held throughout the country, resulting in many arrests. President Emmanuel Macron, whose approval rating has been stagnant, reshuffled his cabinet in July, but only on a small scale. In September, elections were held for the Senate, and although there was a slight decline in right-wing seats and a slight increase in left-wing seats, they resulted in no major changes.

With respect to foreign affairs, at the initiative of President Macron, France held the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact in Paris in June, which was attended by Foreign Minister Hayashi from Japan.

France also held the Paris Peace Forum and various related meetings in November. This played a role in stimulating international discussions on global challenges. In addition, with regard to the situation in Ukraine, France continued sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine. Moreover, with regard to the situation in the Middle East, France has actively conducted diplomatic activities toward stabilizing the situation. President Macron and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Catherine Colonna visited Middle Eastern countries and held the International Humanitarian Conference for the Civilian Population in Gaza in November, which was attended by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi from Japan. With regard to Africa, President Macron is aiming to build a new partnership with the region by reducing the number of French troops stationed in the region and strengthening economic relations, but this is facing growing anti-French sentiment in the former colonies and Russian advances in the region.

With regard to Japan-France relations, on January 1, the Government of Japan opened a consular office in Nouméa in New Caledonia, a French territory which is an important geopolitical point in the Indo-Pacific region.

In 2023, dialogues were held at various levels, including the summit and foreign minister levels. This began with Prime Minister Kishida's visit to France in January. In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna, who was visiting Japan to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Karuizawa, Nagano, in which the ministers concurred to further promote Japan-France cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi and Defense Minister HAMADA Yasukazu held the Seventh Japan-France Foreign and Defense Ministers' Meeting ("2+2") via videoconference with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna and Minister for Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu. In the same month, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting in Hiroshima with President Macron, who was visiting Japan for the G7 Summit, in which the leaders concurred to further deepen bilateral cooperation in a wide range of fields, including security and economic fields. They also concurred to strengthen cooperation in the start-up sectors, including sending



Japan-France Summit Meeting (May 19, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

100 Japanese entrepreneurs to France over a five-year period, as well as cooperation on civil nuclear energy. In June, during his visit to Paris to attend the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna, in which they concurred to set up a working group on economic security in the diplomatic sphere. In September, during the UN General Assembly, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held her first Japan-France Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna. In October, Prime Minister Kishida and Foreign Minister Kamikawa respectively held telephone calls with President Macron and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna, in which they exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East. In November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Colonna, who was visiting Japan to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. In December, during his visit to Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) to attend the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call with President Macron and they issued the Roadmap on Japan-France Cooperation under the "Exceptional Partnership."

### (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 continued to work intensively to respond to the situation in Ukraine on the diplomatic front, including the decision to provide

Leopard 2 battle tanks in January. In addition, with regard to the situation in Israel and Palestine, Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Federal Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock visited Israel to show solidarity and to alleviate the situation, including the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. With regard to the domestic politics of Germany, while the combined approval rating of the three ruling parties has been below 50% against the backdrop of soaring energy and commodity prices and immigration issues, there have been major increases in the approval ratings of the opposition Christian Democratic Union of Germany and Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CDU/CSU), which has been increasingly critical toward the government, as well as the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. State elections were held in four states (Berlin, Bavaria, Hesse, and Bremen). The Social Democratic Party (SPD), Free Democratic Party (FDP), and Greens struggled in many states, while the AfD gained ground in many states. In November, the federal government released its Second Supplementary Budget 2021 in which 60 billion euros, earmarked for the COVID-19 crisis, were reallocated to the original measures of domestic climate change in the country from 2023. The German Constitutional Court ruled that the budget was unconstitutional, creating a situation in which the government was in a bind to pass the budget. Uncertainty in domestic politics has increased, and future developments will be closely observed.

With regard to Japan-Germany relations, the first meeting of the Japan-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations was held in March on the theme of economic security. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action Robert Habeck, Federal Minister of the Interior and Community Christian Lindner, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Baerbock, Federal Minister of the Interior and Community Nancy Faeser, Federal Minister of Defense Boris Pistorius, and Federal Minister for Digital and Transport Volker Wissing all visited Japan for the consultations. Bilateral meetings between the ministers including the Japan-Germany Summit, and a plenary session bringing together all relevant ministers from the two countries were conducted. In addition, German dignitaries visited Japan on the occasion of the G7, for which Japan held the Presidency.



First meeting of the Japan-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations (March 18, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

For example, Chancellor Scholz visited Japan for the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Baerbock visited Japan for the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meetings held in April and November. In the bilateral meetings, the two countries further strengthened their relations as important partners that share fundamental values, including sharing the recognition to continue close cooperation in the realization of FOIP and the response to the situation in Ukraine. In addition, in September, official negotiations between the governments of Japan and Germany began toward the conclusion of the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Germany ACSA) as a legal framework to promote joint activities between the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the German military, and an agreement in principle was reached in November.

## (5) Italy

Immediately after being inaugurated, the administration of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni began taking a cooperative policy with Europe and the U.S. on the diplomatic and economic fronts, including declaring its support and continued assistance for Ukraine with regard to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and maintaining constructive relations with the EU to obtain additional funds for the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. On domestic policy, the government's approval rating, which was in the 50% range at the time of its inauguration, has been gradually declining due in part to soaring prices that have directly affected people's lives and the rapid increase in unauthorized immigrants but has remained in the 40% range. In recent years, even in the Lazio region (capital: Rome),

which had been governed by the left, the unified candidate of the center-right party, which is part of the ruling coalition, won the election, indicating that the center-right is gaining more seats at the local level.

As for Japan-Italy relations, there was dialogue at various levels, including at the summit and foreign minister levels, in light of the fact that it was concurred to upgrade Japan-Italy relations to a “Strategic Partnership” during Prime Minister Kishida’s visit to Italy in January. In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Antonio Tajani during his visit to New York to attend the emergency special session on Ukraine of the UN General Assembly and the ministerial debate at the UN Security Council. Foreign Minister Hayashi also met with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Tajani during the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Karuizawa, Nagano in April. During these meetings, Japan and Italy, which would assume the G7 Presidency following Japan, confirmed the importance of further strengthening cooperation as strategic partners.

Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with Prime Minister Meloni during her visit to Japan in May to attend the G7 Hiroshima Summit. The two leaders shared the view to further deepen bilateral cooperation in a wide range of fields, including defense, security, and economic fields. Furthermore, the two leaders welcomed the conclusion of negotiations on the Japan-Italy Film Co-production Agreement, and in June, Foreign Minister Hayashi signed the Agreement with Minister of Culture Gennaro Sangiuliano, who was visiting Japan.

In November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held an informal talk with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Tajani, who was visiting Japan to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting. The ministers exchanged views on pressing international issues, including the situation in the Middle East, and affirmed that they would carry out the transfer of the G7 Presidency at various levels. In December, during his visit to Dubai, UAE to attend COP28, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with Prime Minister Meloni, in which they concurred on close bilateral cooperation to continue the discussions of the G7 in 2023 under the upcoming Italian G7 Presidency. Furthermore, in February 2024, Prime Minister Meloni visited Japan



Japan-Italy Summit Meeting (May 18, Hiroshima Prefecture; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

and held a meeting with Prime Minister Kishida. The leaders concurred on close cooperation in a wide range of fields upon discussing bilateral relations, regional affairs, and responses to various issues in the international community, with a view to cooperating for the success of the G7 in 2024 under Italy’s Presidency, and to further promote Japan-Italy relations, which have made dramatic progress in recent years.

### (6) Spain

On July 23, parliamentary elections were held for both the Congress of Deputies and Senate, and, as a result, the opposition Popular Party (PP) became the leading party. However, PP leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo did not manage to win the required number of votes in a vote of confidence for prime minister in the Congress of Deputies in September. In October, interim Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of the ruling Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE) was nominated as the candidate for the next prime minister. In November, with the support of leftist parties, including regionalist parties in Catalonia and the Basque Country, he was confirmed by the Congress of Deputies and reappointed as prime minister.

In regard to Japan-Spain relations, the two countries are strengthening their cooperation under the strategic partnership, which was upgraded upon concurrence at the summit in 2018. In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi, who was attending the emergency special session on Ukraine of the UN General Assembly in New York, held a meeting with Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares, in which they discussed matters including cooperation to defend the international order based on the rule of law between Japan, which held





Japan-Spain Foreign Ministers' Meeting (February 23, New York, U.S.)

the G7 Presidency and was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2023, and Spain, which assumed the EU Presidency in the latter half of the year. In addition, there was progress in cooperation between the public and private sectors, including the 23rd Japan-Spain Symposium, which was held in Salamanca, Spain in November.

## (7) Poland

General elections were held in October, and although the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party became the leading party in the lower house, it failed to win a majority, and a new coalition government headed by Prime Minister Donald Tusk, leader of the Civic Platform (PO) party, was formed in December.

Poland, as Ukraine's neighbor, actively responds to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, playing a major role as a hub of support for Ukraine. The protracted aggression has increased the burden and vulnerability of Poland, which has accepted many Ukrainian evacuees. In February, Japan decided to provide Official Development Assistance (ODA) directly to Poland in order to alleviate this burden and effectively provide humanitarian, recovery, and reconstruction assistance to Ukraine.

In regard to Japan-Poland relations, there were frequent high-level mutual visits by dignitaries.

In March, Prime Minister Kishida, the first Japanese prime minister to visit Poland in 10 years, held summit meetings respectively with President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, in which he expressed gratitude for Poland's cooperation for his visit to Ukraine, and held candid exchanges of views regarding the situation in Ukraine and ways to further



Japan-Poland Summit Meeting with President Duda (March 22, Warsaw, Poland; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

progress bilateral relations. In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau during his visit to Belgium to attend the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs. In May, Foreign Minister Rau visited Japan (the first such visit by a Polish foreign minister in six years) and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Hayashi. In July, Prime Minister Kishida visited Poland and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Morawiecki, in which the leaders concurred to further strengthen economic relations and to promote bilateral cooperation on the regional situations in Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific region. Furthermore, in September, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Poland and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Rau for the third time in 2023. In January 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Poland after the new administration was inaugurated. She paid a courtesy call to President Duda and held her first Japan-Poland Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski, in which she confirmed that Japan will continue to strengthen the strategic partnership relationship with the new administration.

## (8) Ukraine

Amid the ongoing Russia's aggression against Ukraine that was started in February 2022, a Japan-Ukraine Summit telephone call was held on January 6, 2023, during which Prime Minister Kishida conveyed to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that Japan would play an active role as the G7 Presidency that same year. Furthermore, on February 18, Foreign Minister Hayashi, who was visiting Germany to attend the Munich Security Conference, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba.



Japan-Ukraine Summit Meeting (March 22, Kyiv, Ukraine; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

On February 24, one year after the start of Russia's aggression, Prime Minister Kishida held the G7 Leaders' Video Conference. The meeting opened with remarks by President Zelenskyy, followed by discussions among the G7 leaders, and the G7 Leaders' Statement was issued after the meeting. In addition, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the emergency special session on Ukraine of the UN General Assembly (February 23) and the ministerial debate at the UN Security Council (February 24), both held in New York.

On March 21, Prime Minister Kishida visited Ukraine and held a summit meeting with President Zelenskyy. Both leaders concurred to further strengthen cooperation and issued the Joint Statement on Special Global Partnership Between Japan and Ukraine. In addition, on the same day, Prime Minister Kishida visited Bucha City on the outskirts of Kyiv and offered flowers at a memorial for the war dead.

On April 4, Foreign Minister Hayashi, who was visiting Belgium to attend the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Kuleba. In addition, on May 12, the Preparatory Meeting on the Reconstruction of Ukraine was established with the aim of close cooperation among relevant ministries and agencies on the promotion of reconstruction of Ukraine by the Japanese public and private sectors. There were three such meetings in 2023.

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit held from May 19 to 21, the G7 leaders also discussed the situation in Ukraine and issued the G7 Leaders' Statement on Ukraine. In addition, President Zelenskyy visited Japan from May 20 to 21 and participated in the session on

Ukraine with the G7 leaders, as well as in the session on peace and stability with the G7 leaders and leaders of invited countries (See the Opening Special Feature on page 2 and Chapter 3, Section 3, 3 (1)). Prime Minister Kishida also held a summit meeting with President Zelenskyy and expressed his desire to further expand and deepen cooperation with Ukraine and to exercise leadership as the G7 Presidency based on the outcomes of the G7 Hiroshima Summit and the Japan-Ukraine Summit Meeting. Moreover, President Zelenskyy visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, where he and Prime Minister Kishida laid a wreath at the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims.

During the Japan-Ukraine summit telephone call on June 9, Prime Minister Kishida and President Zelenskyy exchanged views on the impact of the collapse of the dam at the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant that occurred the same month. In addition, from June 15 to 20, Deputy Prime Minister for Restoration of Ukraine and Minister for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine Oleksandr Kubrakov visited Japan, attended the G7 Transport Ministers' Meeting in Ise-Shima, Mie, and exchanged views with related parties. On June 21, Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the Ukraine Recovery Conference (London, UK) and paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal.

At the NATO Summit Meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania in July, the Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine was announced, and the G7 leaders, including Prime Minister Kishida, and President Zelenskyy attended the ceremony to issue the declaration (on October 7, the first round of negotiations on the preparation of the bilateral document between Japan and Ukraine, based on the "Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine" were held). This was followed by another Japan-Ukraine summit telephone call on August 29.

On September 9, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Ukraine with representatives of Japanese companies, paid courtesy calls to President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Shmyhal, and held a foreign ministers' meeting. At the courtesy call to President Zelenskyy, Foreign Minister Hayashi stated that he would like to support the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine through public and private sector engagement taking the opportunity that the Japanese company representatives



Foreign Minister Hayashi pays a courtesy call to President Zelenskyy (September 9, Kyiv, Ukraine)

are joining this visit with a view to the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction scheduled for the beginning of 2024. During his visit, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Bucha City on the outskirts of Kyiv and attended a ceremony to hand over crane trucks to Ukraine's State Emergency Service. Furthermore, on September 20, during his visit to New York to attend the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Kishida attended the UN Security Council High Level Open Debate on "Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter through effective multilateralism: maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine" (with Foreign Minister Kamikawa also in attendance), and Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Kuleba. On October 3, Prime Minister Kishida participated in the Summit-Level Teleconference on the situation in Ukraine with other like-minded countries at the invitation of President Joseph Biden of the U.S.

On November 8, during the Japan-Ukraine summit telephone call, Prime Minister Kishida and President Zelenskyy concurred to hold the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction in Tokyo on February 19, 2024. On November 20, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto and State Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry IWATA Kazuchika visited Ukraine together with Japanese business representatives and exchanged views mainly on efforts for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction with Prime Minister Shmyhal and other government officials as well as Ukrainian business representatives, including the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.



Joint press conference with the foreign ministers of Japan and Ukraine. Due to an air raid warning, the press conference was held in an underground shelter at short notice (January 7, 2024, Kyiv, Ukraine).

On December 6, Prime Minister Kishida held the G7 Leaders' Video Conference. The meeting opened with remarks by President Zelenskyy, followed by discussions among the G7 leaders, which reaffirmed the G7's unwavering solidarity with Ukraine, and the G7 leaders concurred to remain united in strongly promoting sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine.

On January 7, 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Ukraine, paid courtesy calls to President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Shmyhal, and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Kuleba. Foreign Minister Kamikawa directly conveyed Japan's steadfast basic stance of standing with Ukraine. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa announced that Japan would contribute approximately 37 million U.S. dollars to NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) Trust Fund for Ukraine and provide an unmanned aircraft detection system. She also attended the ceremony for the provision of five mobile gas turbine generators and logistic support for the transport of seven large transformers as winterization assistance. During this visit, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Bucha City and inspected the bridge over the Irpin River near the city. She also visited the facility established by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to provide assistance to women and children at Kyiv Central Railway Station, and exchanged views with people, including representatives of international organizations stationed in Ukraine.

On February 19, 2024, the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction was held in Tokyo with the participation of Prime Minister Shmyhal. At the Leaders'

Session of the Conference, Prime Minister Kishida identified the support for Ukraine as an investment for the future of both countries and the entire world, emphasized that Ukraine's recovery is in the interest of Japan and the international community as a whole, and expressed that Japan would support Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction through both the public and private sectors involvement. As a result of the Conference, 56 cooperation documents from both the public and private sectors were presented. In addition, at the Conference, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Session, during which organic discussions took place between women active in the Government of Ukraine, business, and civil society in order to incorporate women's and children's perspectives into recovery and reconstruction efforts. The meeting provided an opportunity to deliver a strong message to the international community on the need for continued support to Ukraine. On the same day, Prime Minister Shmyhal held a meeting with Prime Minister Kishida, had a dinner meeting with Chief Cabinet Secretary HAYASHI Yoshimasa, and had an informal talk with Foreign Minister Kamikawa. Prime Minister Kishida told Prime Minister Shmyhal that the Conference had achieved remarkable results, including the release of more than 50 cooperation documents from the public and private sectors, and the two leaders concurred to continue to closely follow up the outcomes of Prime Minister Shmyhal's visit to Japan and the Conference. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Prime Minister Shmyhal also concurred to maintain coordination between the two governments to further strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in the international arena (See the Special Feature on page 27).

The Government of Japan will continue to impose severe sanctions against Russia and provide strong support to Ukraine in order to stop Russia's aggression as soon as possible and realize a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. Japan will also accelerate public-private sector initiatives for the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine based on the outcomes of the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction.

### **3 Collaboration with 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 member countries. In addition to defense for its 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. In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, in 2022 Finland and Sweden, which had previously maintained a policy of military non-alignment, applied to join NATO, with Finland joining in April 2023 and Sweden joining in March 2024.

With the existing international order under serious challenge, cooperation between Japan and NATO has become even more important based on the recognition that the security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable. In January, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visited Japan for the first time in six years. In March, in response to the earthquake damage in southeastern Türkiye, Japan dispatched SDF aircraft to transport emergency relief supplies based on the request from the Government of Türkiye and NATO. This was Japan's first international emergency relief operation conducted in cooperation with NATO. In addition, in March, Japan announced a contribution of 30 million U.S. dollars to NATO's CAP Trust Fund for the provision of nonlethal equipment to assist Ukraine in the face of Russia's aggression. Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in April and Prime Minister Kishida attended the NATO Summit Meeting in July, both for the second consecutive year. Prime Minister Kishida met with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg during the Summit Meeting, and the two sides announced agreement on a new cooperation document between Japan and NATO, the Individually Tailored Partnership





Prime Minister Kishida shakes hands with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg. (July 12, Brussels, Belgium; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Joint press conference after the Japan-Finland Foreign Ministers' Meeting (January 9, 2024, Helsinki, Finland)

Programme (ITPP) (See the Special Feature on page 142).

## (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 states 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 the OSCE since 1992 as an Asian Partner for Co-operation. Japan provides support to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries to strengthen border controls to prevent terrorism and strengthen the capabilities of customs officials, to strengthen the leadership capacity of women in conflicts in Ukraine and neighboring countries, and to strengthen the capacity

to prevent human trafficking. Furthermore, the OSCE has been playing an important role in improving the situation in Ukraine even before Russia's aggression began in 2022. 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).

Japan has been attending the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings every year. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa participated in the meeting held in December in North Macedonia. At the meeting, he stated that Japan will further strengthen cooperation with the OSCE, which is addressing issues with a comprehensive approach.

## (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. 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.

At the 4th CoE Summit held in May, Prime Minister Kishida issued a message in which he noted that Japan has deepened its cooperative relations with the CoE, which shares fundamental values and principles. He also welcomed the establishment of an organization to register the damage caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine and stated that Japan will actively participate in future discussions.

## (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

SPECIAL  
FEATURE

## Progress in Japan-NATO Cooperation

2023 was a year of further progress in cooperative relations between Japan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

In July, Prime Minister Kishida participated in the NATO Summit for the second consecutive year, sending a strong message that the security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable. At the Summit, he announced the agreement on the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP), a new programme for Japan-NATO cooperation.

In order to elevate Japan-NATO cooperation to new heights, the ITPP sets 16 specific fields of cooperation, including cyber, strategic communication, and science and technology, under the four priority issues of (1) emerging security issues, (2) longstanding security issues, (3) expansion of cooperative activities, and (4) promotion of fundamental values.

Based on the ITPP, for example, in the cyber area, the first Japan-NATO Cyber Dialogue was held in November, during which both sides exchanged views on their cyber policies and cooperation in the cyber area. In the same month, the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme “Information Day” was held to promote cooperation between Japan and NATO in science and technology. In addition, practical cooperation continues to be implemented, such as the dispatch of female Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) officers to the NATO headquarters and mutual participation as an observer in various exercises and trainings.

In order to respond to the ever-changing international security environment and to maintain and strengthen the international order based on the rule of law, Japan will steadily strengthen its strategic cooperation with NATO, a partner with which Japan shares fundamental values and strategic interests.



Prime Minister Kishida attending the NATO Summit Partner Session (July 12, Vilnius, Lithuania; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

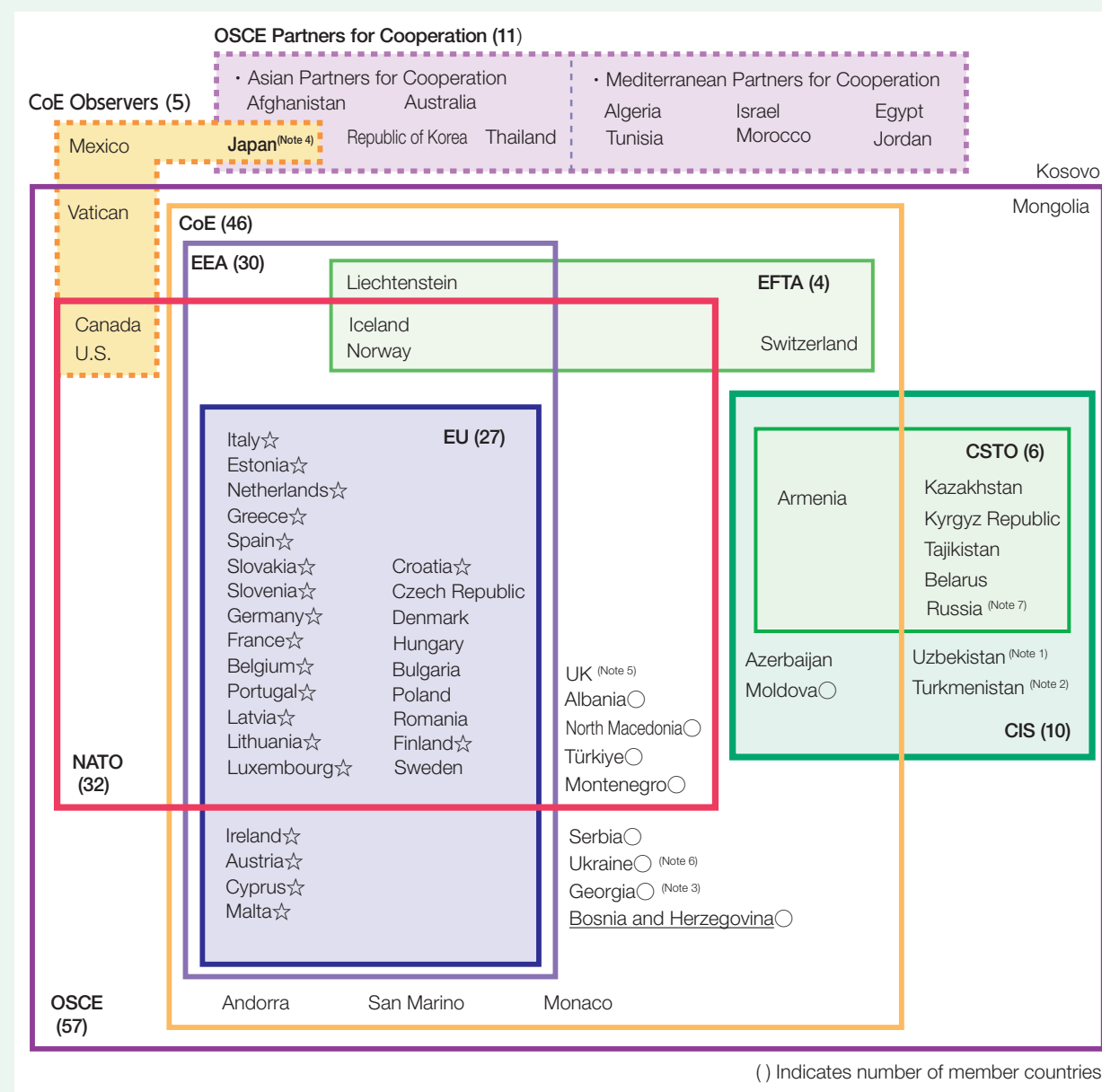
and is responsible for activities in the field of society and culture, one of the three pillars.

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. As part of these efforts, Japan and the ASEF jointly held a high-level conference on “Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in an Era of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and Pandemics” in Tokyo in February. In addition, in June, “Pandemic and the Economy 2023: A Pandemic-Resilient Society” was held in Finland. Under the

ASEF’s Project for Strengthening Preparedness and Response to 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, Czech Republic, and Bulgaria; non-ASEM partner: Moldova).

In addition, Japan contributed to ASEM’s activities including through the implementation of ASEF Classroom Network online projects as a co-host, and its financial contributions to the ASEF.

## Major Frameworks of Europe



## &lt;Legend&gt;

○ : Candidate to be an EU member (9)

☆ : Euro member states (20)

— : Member countries of the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) (1)

(Note 1) Uzbekistan ceased its membership in the CSTO in 2012.

(Note 2) Turkmenistan has been an associate member of the CIS since 2005.

(Note 3) Georgia notified the CIS of its decision to leave the organization in August 2008. It formally withdrew from the CIS in August 2009. It was granted candidate status for EU membership in December 2023.

(Note 4) Japan is a partner country of NATO.

(Note 5) The UK withdrew from the EU on January 31, 2020.

(Note 6) Ukraine signed a presidential decree in April 2018 to withdraw from the CIS.

(Note 7) Russia was excluded from the CoE in March 2022.

## &lt;Abbreviations&gt;

CoE (Council of Europe): (46)

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): (32)

OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe): (57)

### Other European Regions

#### Nordic countries

**Iceland:** In November, Foreign Minister Kamikawa participated in the Reykjavik Global Forum 2023 hosted by Women Political Leaders (WPL),<sup>5</sup> the Government of Iceland, and the Parliament of Iceland via video message.

**Sweden:** In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held an informal talk with Foreign Minister Tobias Billström during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Belgium, and in May, he visited Sweden to attend the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum co-hosted by the EU and Sweden, where he also met with Foreign Minister Billström. In addition, in June, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Minister for Defense Pål Jonson, who was visiting Japan. In July, Prime Minister Kishida, who was visiting Lithuania to attend the NATO Summit Meeting, held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, during which they concurred to further strengthen bilateral security cooperation. In January 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Sweden and held a Japan-Sweden Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

**Denmark:** In October, Prime Minister Kishida held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, who was visiting Japan. The two leaders issued the Joint Leaders' Statement on the Deepening of the Strategic Partnership between Japan and the Kingdom of Denmark as well as the Joint Strategic Work Program.

**Norway:** In December, Prime Minister Kishida held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, who was visiting Japan, and the two leaders issued the Joint Statement on the Strategic Partnership between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway.

**Finland:** In April, Finland joined NATO during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Belgium. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Sweden to attend the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Meeting co-hosted by the EU and Sweden, and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto. In August, the Japan-Finland Working Holiday Agreement entered into force. In January 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Finland and held a Japan-Finland Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

#### Benelux countries

**The Netherlands:** In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wopke Hoekstra during the emergency special session of the UN General Assembly held in New York. Furthermore, in September, Prime Minister Kishida held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Mark Rutte during the G20 Summit in New Delhi, in which the two leaders confirmed the strengthening of cooperation in fields including security. In October, the Japan-Netherlands Peace Exchange Programme was held. In January 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited the Netherlands, paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Rutte, and held a Japan-Netherlands Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

**Belgium:** In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Belgium to attend the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib. In addition, in July, Prime Minister Kishida visited Belgium to attend the Japan-EU Summit Meeting. He held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, during which he confirmed that the two countries will closely cooperate to strengthen bilateral relations and address various international issues.

**Luxembourg:** In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs and Europe Jean Asselborn during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Belgium.

#### Baltic countries

**Estonia:** In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu during the Munich Security Conference held in Germany.

**Latvia:** In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs during his visit to Germany to attend the Munich Security Conference. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Rinkēvičs during his visit to Sweden to attend the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum co-hosted by the EU and Sweden. In August, the Japan-Latvia Working Holiday Agreement entered into force.

**Lithuania:** In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis during his visit to Germany to attend the Munich Security Conference. In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Landsbergis when he visited Japan to attend the Munich Leaders Meeting. In July, Prime Minister Kishida visited Lithuania to attend the NATO Summit Meeting and held meetings with Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė and President Gitanas Nausėda. In addition, during this time, Prime Minister Kishida held an informal talk with the prime ministers of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, in which the leaders concurred to strengthen cooperation between Japan and the three Baltic countries.

<sup>5</sup> WPL is an international network of women politicians and an organization working to increase the number and influence of women political leaders. It was founded in 2013 by former European Parliament Vice President Silvana Koch-Mehrin. Foreign Minister Kamikawa has been a WPL Ambassador since 2016.



**Ireland:** In June, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence Micheál Martin during the Ukraine Reconstruction Conference held in the UK.

**Andorra:** In May, a cabinet shuffle took place and Foreign Minister Imma Tor Faus remained in office. In November, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa paid a courtesy call to Foreign Minister Faus during the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting.

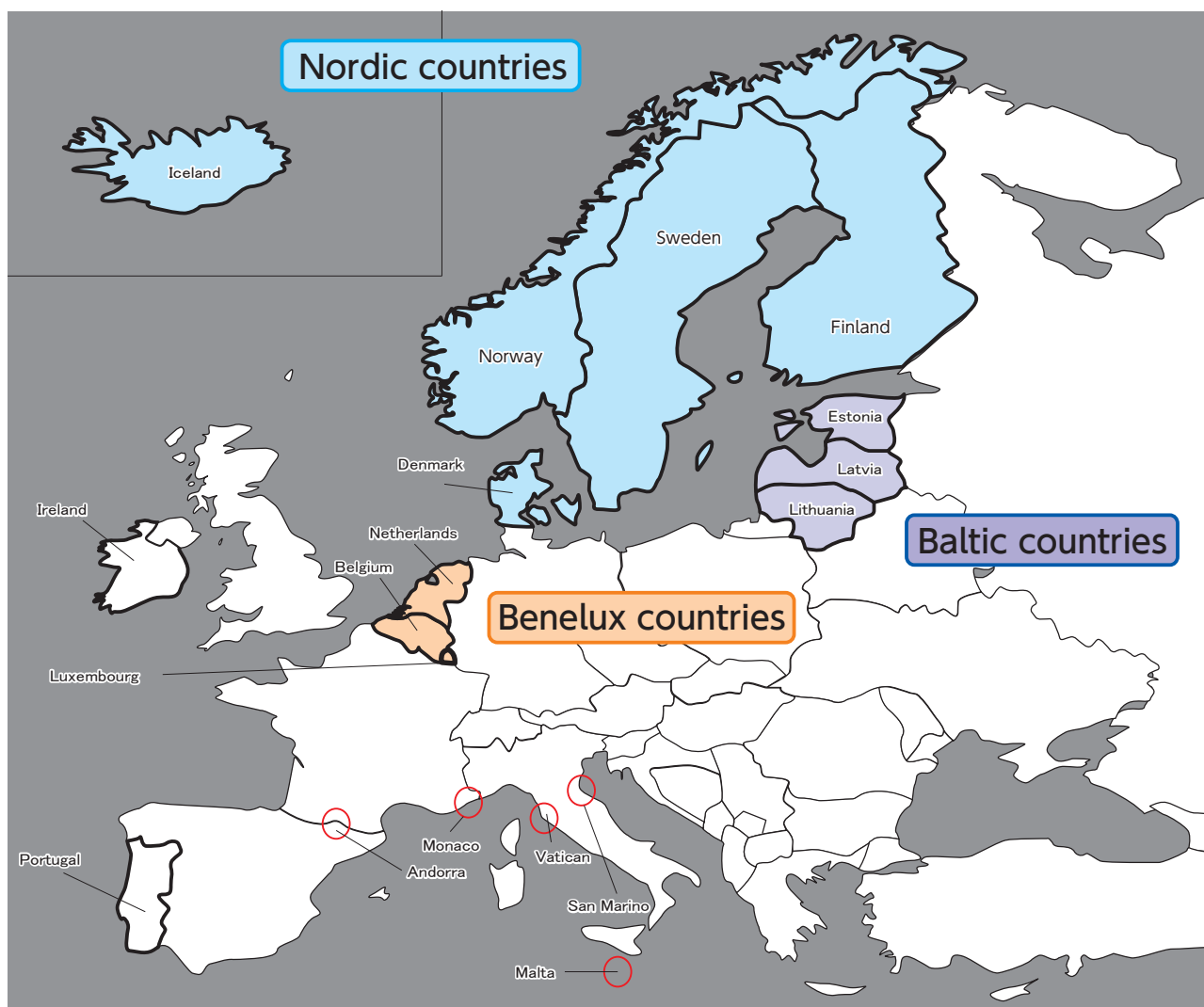
**San Marino:** As heads of state of San Marino, Captains Regent Alessandro Scarano and Adele Tonnini took office in April, followed by Captains Regent Filippo Tamagnini and Gaetano Troina in October.

**The Vatican:** In January, during his visit to Italy, Prime Minister Kishida offered condolences and flowers for the death of His Holiness Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI at the end of December 2022.

**Portugal:** In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister João Gomes Cravinho during the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Belgium. In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Foreign Minister Cravinho during the UN General Assembly in New York.

**Malta:** In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade Ian Borg during the emergency special session on Ukraine of the UN General Assembly in New York. In October, Malta held the third national security advisors' meeting on Ukraine, which was attended by National Security Advisor Akiba. On January 1, 2024, the Embassy of Japan in Malta was opened, which is expected to create an environment for building even closer relations and promoting cooperation between Japan and Malta (See the Column on page 150).

**Monaco:** In August, a delegation of Diet members led by Member of the House of Representatives and Diet Affairs Committee Chairman TAKAGI Tsuyoshi visited Monaco and paid a courtesy call to Minister of State Pierre Dartout.



### [V4]

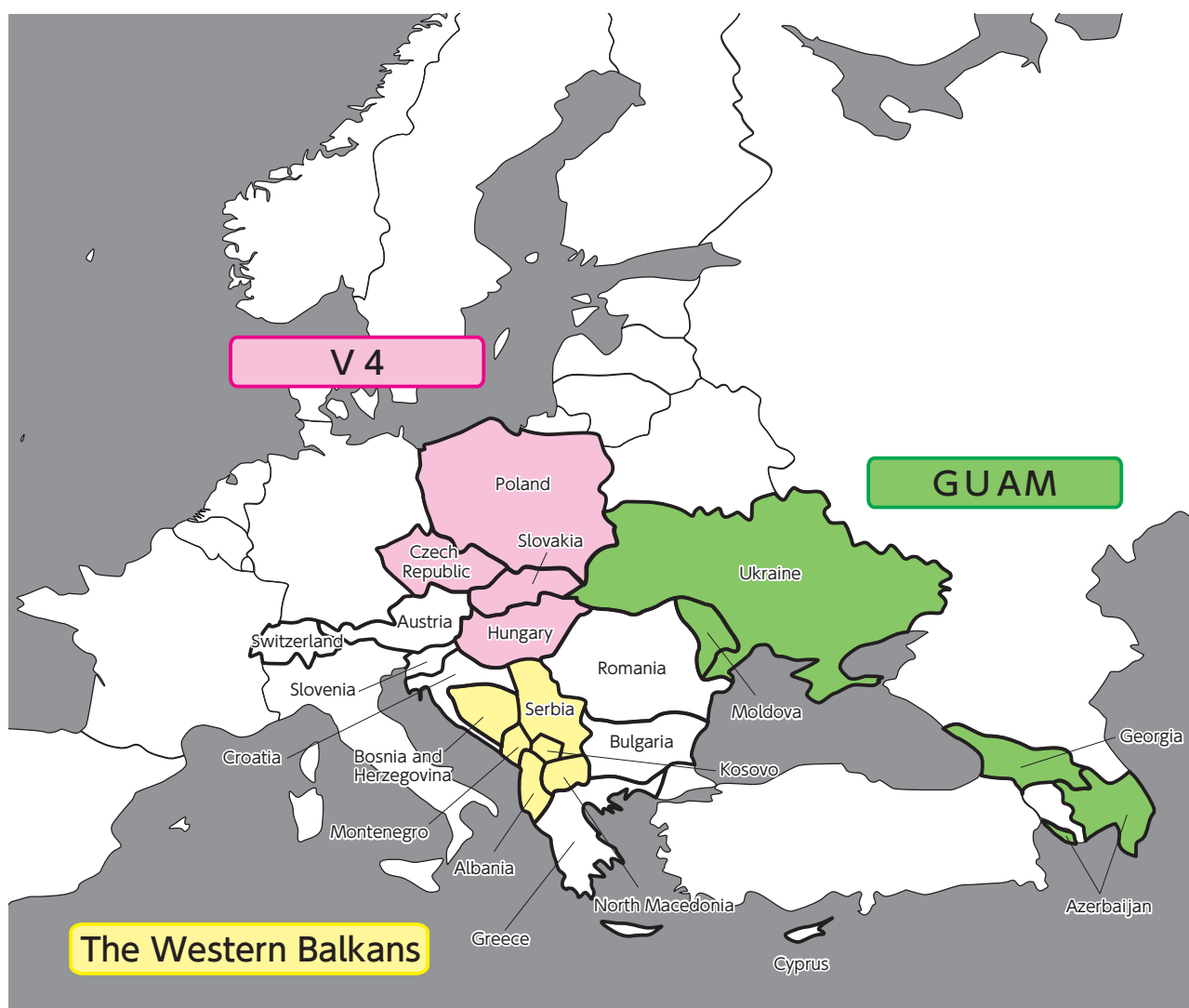
Bilateral relations between Japan and the V4 countries of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary have a long history and are traditionally friendly. Cooperation with the V4, which are neighboring countries of Ukraine and share fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, rule of law, and human rights, is important. The 12th “V4+Japan” policy dialogue was held in March, where the countries reaffirmed strengthening cooperation in a wide range of fields.

**Slovakia (V4 chair until June):** The 30th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Slovakia diplomatic relations was marked by increased exchanges at various levels, including the foreign ministers’ meeting between Foreign Minister Hayashi and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Rastislav Káčer in New York in February, and the meeting between State Minister for Foreign Affairs YAMADA Kenji and State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Ingrid Brocková, who visited Japan in May.

**Czech Republic (V4 chair from July):** In July, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with President Petr Pavel in Lithuania, and the leaders concurred to promote cooperation not only in regional affairs but also in the economic security field. In addition, a delegation of Chamber of Deputies diplomatic members (April), Deputy Prime Minister for Digitisation Ivan Bartoš (June), Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health Vlastimil Válek (October), and Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security of the Senate Chairperson Pavel Fischer (October) visited Japan, strengthening intergovernmental and legislative ties in the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Czech Republic diplomatic relations.

**Poland:** See 2 (7) Poland

**Hungary:** In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a foreign ministers’ meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó in New York. In July, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Szijjártó visited Japan and held a foreign ministers’ meeting with Foreign Minister Hayashi.



## The Western Balkans

In the Western Balkans region, despite ongoing concerns about peace implementation and ethnic conflicts, including the intensification of separatist actions by the Republika Srpska, one of the two entities that make up Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the stalled dialogue aimed at normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo, countries in the region have made overall progress toward stability and development as they undertake reforms aimed at joining the EU. As part of the “Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative,”<sup>6</sup> in November, as a collaborative project with the Western Balkan Fund established by the governments of the Western Balkans, Japan held an inter-regional conference on the theme of responding to disinformation with participants from each West Balkan country. Moreover, 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 February, Prime Minister Kishida met with Prime Minister Edi Rama of Albania during his visit to Japan. The two leaders concurred on the importance of addressing Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the need to respond to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East and South China Seas, and shared serious concerns over North Korea's increasing nuclear and missile activities. They also concurred to further strengthen cooperation in the international arena, including the UN, taking into account that both Japan and Albania are non-permanent members of the UN Security Council. In addition, in December, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa, during his visit to North Macedonia to attend the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, held a meeting with Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani.

**Slovenia:** In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon during her visit to the U.S. to attend the UN General Assembly High-Level Week.

**Romania:** In March, Prime Minister Kishida met with President Klaus-Werner Iohannis and Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu during their visit to Japan, upgrading Japan-Romania bilateral relations to a strategic partnership (See the Column on page 148). In June, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs YOSHIKAWA Yuumi visited Romania and attended the opening ceremony of the Braila Bridge, which was constructed with Japanese technology. In September, Prime Minister Kishida participated via video message in the Three Seas Summit held in Bucharest. In October, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji visited Romania and paid courtesy calls to Presidential Advisor Bogdan Lucian Aurescu and Foreign Minister Luminita Odobescu.

**Bulgaria:** In April, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Nikolay Milkov in Belgium.

**Croatia:** In celebration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Croatia diplomatic relations in 2023, Foreign Minister Hayashi met with Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Gordan Grlić-Radman in New York in February and in Tokyo in July. During the foreign ministers' meeting in July, the Japan-Croatia Air Services Agreement was signed. In addition, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshikawa visited Croatia in July, and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji visited Croatia in October.

**Austria:** In May, an agreement in principle was reached for the Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Austria on Social Security, which had been the subject of intergovernmental negotiations. Foreign Minister Hayashi also held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister for European and International Affairs Alexander Schallenberg in the same month. In addition, in November, the 25th meeting of the Japan-Austria Committee for Issues of the Future was held in Kofu City, Yamanashi Prefecture, on the theme of efforts toward a decarbonized society in both countries.

**Liechtenstein:** In June, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a foreign ministers' meeting in the UK with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport Dominique Hasler, the first-ever Japan-Liechtenstein Foreign Ministers' Meeting since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1996.

**Switzerland:** In July, the governments of Japan and Switzerland held the fifth meeting of the Joint Committee and the third meeting of the Sub-Committee on Rules of Origin, Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation established under the Free Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (FTEPA) between Japan and Switzerland. In November, there was an announcement of the logo commemorating the 160th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Switzerland in 2024.

**Greece:** In January, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who was on an official working visit to Japan. The two leaders issued the Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Hellenic Republic. In November, the Tax Convention between Japan and the Hellenic Republic was signed.

**Cyprus:** In May, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Constantinos Kombos during the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum, jointly held by the EU and Sweden, in Stockholm.

**Moldova:** Japan maintained close relations with Moldova, which is in a difficult situation due to Russia's aggression. In February, Foreign Minister Hayashi held a telephone call with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Nicu Popescu. In October, Foreign Minister Kamikawa participated via video message in the 4th Ministerial Conference of the Moldova Support Platform held in Chișinău, the capital of Moldova, expressing continued support for Moldova as it is affected by Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>6</sup> 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, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 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.

## COLUMN

## Deepening Japan-Romania Relations: Upgrading Relations to the Status of Strategic Partners

### ● Romania: A Latin Country in Eastern Europe

Romania is located in southeastern Europe, with a land area roughly the size of Japan's *Honshu* Island and a population of about 19.05 million, the sixth largest among the 27 countries of the European Union (EU). With Romanian roots in the indigenous Dacians and Romans, the country is also known as the "Latin island in the Slavic sea." Since joining the EU in 2007, Romania's economy has been steadily growing, achieving 4.8% growth in 2022 against the backdrop of 10.69 billion euros in foreign investment, the highest amount ever. Romania is also a friendly country to Japan in Eastern Europe with the second largest number of Japanese language learners after Poland.

Romania borders Ukraine, and its government and citizens have taken the initiative in assisting many displaced persons since Russia's aggression against Ukraine launched. Romania's support for Ukraine is reminiscent of its support for Japan at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake, when it accepted students from Fukushima University and held an exhibition of paintings by children from Fukushima.

### ● History of Japan-Romania Exchanges

Japan-Romania relations date back to the establishment of Romania's legation in Tokyo in 1921. Diplomatic relations were severed in 1944 but resumed in 1959. Prime Minister Abe became the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit Romania in 2018, and the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Romania was celebrated in 2021. While struggling with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan widely introduced Japanese culture to Romania, such as through online performances of *Awa Ningyo Joruri* puppet theater and participating in "Bookfest," Romania's largest book festival. In addition, Romania issued a commemorative coin from its central bank, and the Radu Stanca National Theater Sibiu held a performance in Japan. Through such festive events, bilateral exchanges were further deepened.

### ● Signing of the Joint Statement on the Establishment of the Strategic Partnership

In March 2023, President Klaus-Werner Iohannis visited Japan and signed the "Joint Statement on the Establishment of the Strategic Partnership between Japan and Romania" with Prime Minister Kishida, upgrading bilateral relations to a strategic partnership.

In light of this, in the areas of diplomacy and security, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs YOSHIKAWA Yuumi (July), Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Defense ONODA Kimi (August), and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto (October) visited Romania in succession. In July, a defense attaché was assigned to the Embassy of Japan in Romania for the first time in 22 years.

On the economic front, in May, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry NISHIMURA Yasutoshi became the first Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry to visit Romania, and signed the "Joint Statement on economic cooperation." In June, the "Romanian-Japanese Innovation Forum" was held with themes including start-ups, 5G, and smart cities. In July, a ceremony was held to mark the completion of the Braila Bridge, the third longest suspension bridge in the EU, over the



Logo for the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Romania



Commemorative coin issued by Romania's central bank to mark the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations (one side features a Japanese design and the other has a Romanian design)



Prime Minister Kishida and President Iohannis signing the Joint Statement on the Establishment of the Strategic Partnership between Japan and Romania (March 7, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)



Danube River. Built with Japanese technology, the Braila Bridge is a successful example of project cooperation in line with the “Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure between Japan and the European Union.”

In terms of culture, various events were held, including the “Hanami” cherry blossom viewing event in the Japanese Garden in Bucharest (April); the “I Love Sushi” exhibition (May-June); various cooperation activities with the Sibiu International Theater Festival, one of the three major theater festivals in Europe (June); the Japan festival at the Comic Con in Bucharest, the largest pop culture convention in Eastern Europe (September); the Japanese Film Festival in Timișoara, which was selected as one of the 2023 European Capitals of Culture (November); and the *Tenjin Matsuri* performance at the National Theatre of Bucharest (November).

Japan will continue to further deepen Japan-Romania relations, which have made great strides through the strategic partnership.

## COLUMN

## Establishment of the Embassy of Japan in Malta

Malta is located in the center of the Mediterranean Sea. It was occupied by Napoleon's forces at the end of the 18th century and became a British territory in the early 19th century, but gained independence in 1964 and established diplomatic relations with Japan the following year in 1965. Malta is familiar to those in the know as Japan's largest source for imported bluefin tuna. The Embassy of Japan in Malta was established in January 2024. With this establishment, Japan now has diplomatic bases in all 27 member states of the European Union (EU).

Japan-Malta exchanges have been strengthened since Prime Minister Abe became the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit Malta in 2017. Prime Minister Joseph Muscat visited Japan in 2018, and President George Vella attended the Ceremony of the Enthronement of His Majesty the Emperor in 2019. The Embassy of Malta in Japan opened in 2020, and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade Ian Borg visited Japan to attend the state funeral for the late Prime Minister ABE Shinzo. In this way, bilateral exchanges have rapidly increased in recent years.

Malta is an important maritime state that leads the world in maritime issues, and is committed to ensuring peace and security in the Mediterranean Sea. Its importance has been particularly growing in recent years for Japan, which is working to realize a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" based on the rule of law. In addition, Malta has been serving with Japan as a non-permanent member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council from 2023 to 2024. At the Japan-Malta Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in February 2023 in New York, the United States, the two foreign ministers concurred to further strengthen cooperation between the two countries as partners who share values and principles.

By establishing a diplomatic base in Malta, which is becoming increasingly important as described above, and by holding constant exchanges of views with stakeholders there in various fields, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will promote understanding on Japan in Malta as well as discussions on further bilateral cooperation going forward.

Furthermore, Valletta, Malta's capital city, which was built in the 16th century and is entirely registered as a World Cultural Heritage Site, is a popular tourist destination. The number of Japanese tourists visiting the city surged from 8,500 to 22,000 between 2015 and 2019 before the spread of COVID-19. With English and Maltese being the official languages of Malta, the number of Japanese students studying English in the country has also increased rapidly, reaching approximately 3,000 by 2022. Thus, there is dramatically increasing need for consular services for Japanese residents and tourists in Malta.

Until now, consular services had been provided by officials of the Embassy of Japan in Italy to Japanese residents in Malta who regularly traveled to Malta, but in urgent cases, consular services could only be received by visiting the Embassy in Italy. With the opening of the Embassy of Japan in Malta, consular services are now available at the Embassy there. In addition, Japanese residents in Malta will be able to receive assistance more quickly in the event of an incident or accident in Malta.

Moreover, Japan expects that public relations, cultural exchanges, and other such activities in Malta will be more active than before, with the Embassy of Japan in Malta as their hub. In light of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Malta in 2025, the opening of this embassy will yield the greatest effect of public relations and promotion of understanding on Japan through the deepening of cooperation with local cultural organizations and the continuous implementation of programs that introduce Japanese culture and promotion of Japanese language education.

Japan looks forward to further deepening Japan-Malta cooperation in a variety of fields, with the Embassy of Japan in Malta as the hub.



The opening ceremony held to commemorate the establishment of the Embassy of Japan in Malta (February 26, 2024, Malta)