

## Section 5

## Europe

### 1 Overview

#### <The Importance of Cooperation with Europe, Which Shares Values and Principles>

The European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),<sup>(1)</sup> and European countries are important partners for Japan, sharing values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. As Russia's aggression against Ukraine has continued for more than two years, threatening the existing international order and intensifying geopolitical competition, it is becoming even more important to strengthen cooperation with the EU, NATO, and European countries in order to respond to the challenges to the values and principles important to Japan and Europe, and to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law. In particular, as the need for international coordination in addressing global issues such as climate change has further increased, the necessity of 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 ability to communicate in the international community.

#### <Russia's Aggression Against Ukraine and Europe>

In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began in February 2022, Japan has strongly promoted support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia, in close cooperation with the G7 and the rest of the international community, to end Russia's aggression as soon as possible. Japan has demonstrated solidarity with Ukraine at various levels, including at the leader's and ministerial levels, such as through the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction in February, the Japan-Ukraine Summit Meetings in April and September, and the visit to Ukraine by Foreign Minister Iwama in November. Japan has also closely cooperated with Ukraine to provide support that meet the needs of the country.

In Europe, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has become one of the most important issues. The EU, NATO, 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 macro financial 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

(1) NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization. For more information, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website for details: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/nato/index.html>

(2) 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.



Ukraine).<sup>(3)</sup> In addition, at the NATO Summit in July, NATO announced the decision to establish the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU), expressed that Ukraine's future is in NATO, and reaffirmed its position to extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the Alliance when Allies agree and conditions are met. The United Kingdom (UK) has provided military, humanitarian, and economic support totaling 12.5 billion UK pounds, including 90 Brimstone missiles, and has announced it will continue military assistance to Ukraine totaling 3 billion UK pounds annually for as long as necessary through 2030. France held a conference in support of Ukraine in February and announced the provision of Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets during President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit in June. France continues to provide military, humanitarian, and economic assistance. Germany held the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin in June and has provided support totaling approximately 37 billion euro since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

#### <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 2024, 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 July, during his visit to Washington, D.C., Prime Minister Kishida attended the NATO Summit for the third consecutive year and shared the recognition with various countries that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable.

Throughout 2024, Prime Minister Kishida held summit meetings with the leaders of Italy, Ukraine, the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, France, Finland, and Luxembourg, and confirmed close cooperation with these European countries.

At the foreign minister level, Foreign Minister Iwaya held the first-ever Japan-EU Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue in which cooperation was deepened in the security field, including the announcement of the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership.

As for legal frameworks in the security field, the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Germany ACSA) was signed in January and entered into force in July.

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>

The year 2024 was a year of organization change for the EU. In the European Parliament elections held in

<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.

June, the center-right European People's Party (EPP) retained its position as the largest political group, followed by the center-left Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) as the second largest group. Meanwhile, the liberal Renew Europe group and the environmentalist Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) lost ground, while right-wing and far-right groups gained momentum. In particular, the far-right saw significant gains in France and Germany. In response to the European Parliament election results, President Emmanuel Macron of France announced the dissolution of the National Assembly on June 9. Following the European Parliament elections, coalition negotiations were held to secure a majority that would influence the formation of political groups and key EU leadership appointments. Two new far-right political groups were formed: Patriots for Europe (Pfe) and Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN). After coordination at the summit level, a new EU leadership structure was selected at the June European Council meeting, including António Luis Santos da Costa as President of the European Council and Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission. A strategic agenda was also adopted, built on three main pillars: (a) a free and democratic Europe, (b) a strong and secure Europe, and (c) a prosperous and competitive Europe. The new European Commission took office in December, and President Costa of the European Council assumed his position in the same month.

As Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine, the EU has adopted 15 sanctions packages against Russia since February 2022. These include asset freezes and travel bans targeting more than 2,300 individuals and entities, as well as economic sanctions and media restrictions. In June, the EU signed the "Joint Security Commitments" with Ukraine. Furthermore, it adopted a negotiating framework for Ukraine's EU accession and formally began accession negotiations.

In addition, in October, the EU held its first-ever summit with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), committing to elevate the strategic partnership between the EU and GCC to the next level.

### <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 June, Prime Minister Kishida held an informal talk with President von der Leyen of the European Commission during the G7 Apulia Summit in Italy. The two leaders concurred on continuing to work together on economic security issues within fora such as the G7. In September, during his visit to New York to attend the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with President von der Leyen of the European Commission. During the meeting, President von der Leyen once again expressed gratitude for the significant development of Japan-EU relations under the Kishida administration. Building on this foundation, the two leaders concurred on continuing to strengthen Japan-EU relations. Furthermore, Prime Minister Kishida also held a meeting with President Charles Michel of the European Council. The two leaders exchanged views on Japan-EU relations as well as regional affairs, including the Indo-Pacific, and concurred on continuing close cooperation in various fields both between Japan and the EU and within the G7.

In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya held the first Japan-EU Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell Fontelles, who was visiting Japan. During the dialogue, Foreign Minister Iwaya exchanged instruments related to ratification of the Japan-EU SPA, and the agreement formally entered into force on January 1, 2025. Furthermore, the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership was announced. Japan became the first country in the Indo-Pacific with which the EU publicly announced such a partnership. In light of the recent increasingly severe security environment, Japan and the EU concurred on strengthening concrete cooperation and dialogue in areas such as cyber issues, space, responses to hybrid threats, and maritime security. In addition, in February, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUGE Yoshifumi attended the Third EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum held in Brussels, Belgium. He welcomed the increasing interest and engagement of European countries and the EU in the Indo-Pacific and stated Japan's intention to cooperate

toward maintaining and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

The EU, with its economic scale that follows the United States (U.S.) and China, is an important economic partner of Japan, ranking third 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. In addition, on July 1, the Protocol Amending the Agreement Between the European Union and Japan for an Economic Partnership entered into force, including provisions on the free flow of data. This amendment is expected to ensure predictability regarding cross-border data flows, promote data exchange between Japan and the EU, and ultimately contribute to strengthening Japan-EU economic relations. With regard to the Japan-EU EPA, in July, the fifth meeting of the Joint Committee established under the Japan-EU EPA was held between Foreign Minister

Kamikawa and Executive Vice President of the European Commission for an Economy that Works for People, and European Commissioner for Trade, Valdis Dombrovskis. Both sides confirmed progress in various fields, discussed responses to the EU's introduction of advanced regulations, and ensured steady implementation and operation of the EPA through the various specialized committees and working groups. Separately from the EPA, as part of efforts to promote broader strategic cooperation with the EU, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry SAITO Ken, and Executive Vice President Dombrovskis held the fifth Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue in May. They confirmed cooperation in the economic security field, the launch of the "Transparent, Resilient and Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative," and strengthening of the free trade system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core among others. Going forward, Japan will continue to ensure the steady implementation of the Japan-EU EPA and promote cooperation with the EU, including the Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue, with the aim of further developing Japan-EU economic relations.



Meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and President of the European Commission von der Leyen (September 23, New York, U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



1st Japan-EU Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue (November 1, Tokyo)

## (2) United Kingdom

In April, the Safety of Rwanda bill submitted by the Sunak administration was enacted, enabling the transfer of asylum seekers to Rwanda. However, the European Court of Human Rights and the Supreme Court of the UK ruled this illegal, and the transfers were never carried out. In May, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak dissolved the House of Commons, and a general election for the House of Commons was held in July. The Labour Party, led by Keir Starmer won an outright majority, bringing about a change in government for the first time in 14 years. The Labour Party had pledged five missions (kickstart economic growth, make Britain a clean energy superpower, restore public safety, break down barriers to opportunity, and build a national health service fit for the future). Following the electoral defeat, Prime Minister Sunak resigned. That same month, the new administration abolished the plan to transfer asylum seekers to Rwanda. However, immigration remained a major domestic issue in the UK, and from late July to early August, riots broke out





Japan-UK Summit Meeting (November 18, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

in various locations, triggered by an incident involving the injury and death of children.

There was an active dialogue between the governments of Japan and the UK at various levels, including the summit and foreign minister levels. In February, Prime Minister Kishida received a courtesy call by the Japanese and British co-chairs and British members of the Japan-UK 21st Century Group. Prime Minister Kishida also held an informal talk with Prime Minister Sunak during the G7 Apulia Summit in June. Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call in July with Prime Minister Starmer, followed by a meeting during the NATO Summit held that same month. In November, Prime Minister Ishiba held a meeting with Prime Minister Starmer during the G20 Rio Summit, during which the leaders announced the launch of the Japan-UK Economic 2+2 Ministers' Meeting ("Economic 2+2").

At the foreign minister level, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held meetings with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs David Cameron during the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in February and the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in April. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also held a telephone call with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs David Lammy in July as well as a meeting during the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings later that month. Foreign Minister Iwaya also held a telephone call with Secretary Lammy in October, and they met again in person during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November.

On the cultural front, effective April 1, the number of UK nationals eligible to participate in Japan's

Working Holiday Program (visa issuance quota) was increased from 1,000 to 6,000 per year. (Note: The number of Japanese nationals eligible to use the UK Youth Mobility Scheme (visa issuance quota) was increased from 1,500 to 6,000 per year effective January 31, 2024.) In addition, effective December 1, the maximum stay period for UK nationals participating in Japan's Working Holiday Program was extended from one year to two years. These developments are expected to further promote youth exchanges and mutual understanding between Japan and the UK.

### (3) France

In January, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne resigned, and Gabriel Attal was inaugurated as the new Prime Minister, becoming the youngest in the history of the Fifth Republic.

In May, deliberations were held in the National Assembly on a constitutional amendment regarding voting rights in local elections in New Caledonia, a French overseas territory. Pro-independence groups turned violent, and a state of emergency was declared across New Caledonia. President Macron then visited New Caledonia, and after holding discussions with both pro-independence and anti-independence groups, President Macron expressed his intention to pursue a "comprehensive agreement" through the restoration of public order, economic recovery, and political dialogue.

In June, President Macron dissolved the National Assembly, with the first round of voting held on June 30 and the second round on July 7. As a result, the left-wing coalition made significant gains and became the party with the most seats, while the ruling coalition suffered major losses and became the party with the second-largest number of seats. In response, Prime Minister Attal announced his resignation. Subsequent coordination over the nomination of a new prime minister led to President Macron appointing Michel Barnier, a former chief negotiator on Brexit and member of the right-wing Republicans Party rather than a candidate from the left-wing coalition, as the new Prime Minister on September 5. The new Barnier cabinet was then formed.

In addition, the Paris 2024 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games were held from July to September.

With respect to foreign affairs, France worked to

continue and strengthen its support for Ukraine in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In February, a France-Ukraine summit meeting was held, and the two countries signed a bilateral security agreement to ensure Ukraine's long-term security. In addition, during the same month, President Macron held an international conference on support for Ukraine, taking a leading role in international support for Ukraine. With regard to the situation in the Middle East, France has called for an immediate and sustained ceasefire in Gaza as well as the immediate release of the hostages and has been actively engaged in efforts toward resolving the situation. Since taking office, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noël Barrot has made multiple visits to the Middle East. In October, under President Macron's initiative, France held an international conference on support for Lebanon, during which it announced 100 million euro in aid and the provision of 100 tons of humanitarian supplies to the country.

With regard to Japan-France relations, in February, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Rio de Janeiro to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Stéphane Séjourné. During the meeting, Foreign Minister Kamikawa expressed her hope to further advance Japan-France relations by following up on the Roadmap on Japan-France Cooperation under the "Exceptional Partnership" announced at the Japan-France Summit Meeting in December 2023. In February 2024, based on the Roadmap, the first Japan-France Economic Security Working Group was held in Paris, where the two sides exchanged views on key issues concerning economic security such as the protection of

critical and emerging technologies, strengthening the resilience of supply chains, responding to non-market measures and practices, and countering economic coercion. In May, Prime Minister Kishida visited Paris to attend the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting and held a Japan-France Summit Meeting with President Macron. In the meeting, the two leaders welcomed the multilayered developments of Japan-France cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and announced the launch of negotiations on the Japan-France Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA). Prime Minister Kishida also held an exchange of views with Prime Minister Attal during the visit. In the same month, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, who accompanied Prime Minister Kishida to France, held a Japan-France Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Séjourné. The two Ministers concurred to further deepen the historic friendly relations between Japan and France as "Exceptional Partners" across the fields of security, the economy, and culture.

In October, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Barrot. In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Italy to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting and held his first in-person Japan-France Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Barrot.

In December, Prime Minister Barnier invoked Article 49.3 of the French Constitution during the deliberations on the Social Security Financing Bill, part of the 2025 budget proposal. In response, the opposition submitted a no-confidence motion, which was passed. This resulted in the collapse of the Barnier cabinet. On December 13, President Macron appointed François Bayrou, leader of the Democratic Movement, as the new Prime Minister.

#### (4) Germany

The administration of Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party (SPD)) faced internal policy conflicts within the coalition, including over fiscal policy, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) withdrew from the government in November. As a result, the so-called "traffic light coalition" composed of the SPD, the Green Party, and the FDP collapsed, and the government was forced to operate as a two-party



Japan-France Summit Meeting (May 2, Paris, France; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

minority administration composed of the SPD and the Green Party for the time being. Seeking cooperation from the largest opposition party, the Christian Democratic Union of Germany and Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CDU/CSU, conservative), with the goal of passing legislation and the budget bill by the end of the Bundestag parliamentary session in December, Chancellor Scholz expressed his intention to dissolve the Bundestag after the passage of the 2025 budget bill and other related legislation, and to move up the next federal election, which was originally scheduled for September 2025. Subsequently, after consultations between the ruling and opposition parties, it was agreed that the early election would be held on February 23, 2025. The movements of each party ahead of the early federal election are drawing attention amid rising support for the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD), which advocates for strict immigration policies, and expanded its influence in the June European Parliament election as well as in the September state elections in two states that were formerly part of East Germany.

Regarding diplomatic policy, Germany continued to work intensively to respond to the situation in Ukraine, including holding the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC) in June. With regard to the Israel-Palestine situation, Chancellor Scholz and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Annalena Baerbock visited Israel to express solidarity with the country, while also calling for improvements in the humanitarian situation in the Gaza and taking steps to ease tensions. In the area of security, as part of efforts to implement the Policy Guidelines for the Indo-Pacific formulated by the Government of Germany in 2020, Germany strengthened its engagement in the region under the Indo-Pacific Deployment 2024, including port calls in Tokyo in August by the frigate *Baden-Württemberg* and the replenishment ship *Frankfurt am Main*.

With regard to Japan-Germany relations, Germany is an important partner that shares common values and principles, and high-level exchanges continue to take place actively. In July, Prime Minister Kishida visited Berlin and held a Japan-Germany Summit Meeting, during which both sides welcomed the progress in bilateral security cooperation in recent years, particularly as Germany strengthens its engagement in the

Indo-Pacific region. In the same month, the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) entered into force, establishing a framework for settlement procedures for the reciprocal provision of supplies and services between the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Germany. The ACSA is expected to promote closer cooperation between the SDF and the German Armed Forces, and enable Japan and Germany to actively contribute to peace and security of the international community. In addition, bilateral cooperation in the increasingly important field of economic security has advanced in recent years. In November, the first meeting of the Japan-Germany Economic Security Consultations took place in Berlin. Moreover, 2024 marked the 50th anniversary of the Agreement between Japan and Germany on Cooperation in the field of Science and Technology, and a commemorative Jubilee was held in Kyoto in October.

## (5) Italy

The administration of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has maintained a cooperative policy with Europe and the U.S. on the diplomatic and economic fronts. In the European Parliament elections held in June, the right-wing party Brothers of Italy (European Conservatives and Reformists), led by Prime Minister Meloni, secured 28.8% of the vote, strongly defending its position as the leading party in Italy. In terms of domestic affairs, illegal immigration countermeasures and responses to the declining birthrate and aging population remain ongoing issues. While working to curb unauthorized immigration, the Government of Italy also responded to domestic labor shortages by expanding the quota for legal entries from outside the EU to 452,000 in July 2023. (Note: The quota was 83,000 in 2022.)

As for Japan-Italy relations, as Italy succeeded Japan as the G7 Presidency, dialogue and mutual visits between the two countries became even more active at various levels, including at the summit and foreign minister levels. During Prime Minister Meloni's visit to Japan in February, the two sides confirmed cooperation in the field of security, as seen in the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP), joint naval exercises, and port calls by naval vessels, including those of aircraft carrier strike group (CSG). At the G7 Apulia Summit in June,



Japan-Italy Summit Meeting (February 5, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Meloni held an informal talk and announced the launch of the Japan-Italy Action Plan as well as the start of negotiations on the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA).

Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Antonio Tajani, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, held telephone calls in January, April, and June, confirming that the two countries would closely cooperate under Italy's G7 Presidency. August saw the entry into force of the Japan-Italy Film Co-production Agreement, which had been signed the previous year by then Foreign Minister Hayashi and Minister of Culture Gennaro Sangiuliano.

In the field of security, from August 2 to 5, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Training Squadron *Kashima* and *Shimakaze* made a port call in Naples and conducted a Japan-Italy goodwill exercise with the Italian Navy frigate *Margottini* in the Aegean Sea. From August 6 to 8, Italian Air Force fighter jets visited Japan and participated in the Japan-U.S.-Italy joint exercise "Rising Sun 24" at Misawa Air Base. In late August, an Italian CSG made a port call in Japan, consisting of the light aircraft carrier *Cavour*, the frigate *Alpino*, and the patrol vessel *Montecuccoli*, which participated in the joint exercise "Noble Raven 24-3" with Japan, Australia, Italy, Germany, and France in the area from south of the Kanto region to east of Okinawa. During the same period, the Italian Navy training ship *Amerigo Vespucci* made its first-ever port call in Tokyo, and Minister of Defence Guido Crosetto visited Japan in conjunction with the ship's port call.

In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Fiuggi,

Italy, to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. While in Rome, he met with Minister of Defense Crosetto, and the two Ministers signed the Japan-Italy ACSA.

## (6) Spain

In November 2023, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez was reappointed as Prime Minister following a successful vote of confidence in the lower house of parliament with the support of left-wing parties, including regionalist parties from Catalonia and the Basque Country. (This marked the launch of the third Sánchez administration.) Spain's domestic economy recorded a growth rate exceeding that of the EU (Spain had a 2.5% growth rate in 2023 compared to the EU average of 0.4%), supported by the recovery of the tourism sector and a decline in electricity prices. However, Spain continues to face challenges such as a high unemployment rate and fiscal stabilization, even within the EU framework.

With 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, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge, who was attending the Third EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum in Belgium, held a meeting with Diego Martínez Belío, State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation. Both sides welcomed the progress of bilateral cooperation in fields such as security, defense, and the economy, and confirmed they would further promote such cooperation. In July, Minister of Economy, Trade and Enterprise Carlos Cuerpo visited Japan and exchanged views on bilateral business opportunities.

In addition, there was progress in cooperation both in the public and private sectors, including the 24th Japan-Spain Symposium held in Takamatsu City, Kagawa Prefecture in October. In the economic field, progress was also seen in bilateral cooperation in the renewable energy sector, such as in offshore wind power generation.

Bilateral defense cooperation also steadily progressed. In July, Eurofighter aircraft from the Spanish Air Force visited Japan, and in August, the JMSDF Training Squadron made its first-ever port call in Valencia.



## (7) Poland

Poland, as Ukraine's neighbor, has actively responded since the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, playing a major role as a hub of support to Ukraine. Poland has been accepting many Ukrainian evacuees, and Japan has been providing support to Poland in light of the increasing burden and vulnerability it faces. In addition, in December, in order to contribute to the stabilization of living conditions and the securing of educational opportunities for Ukrainian children continuing to live as evacuees in Poland, Japan decided to provide language therapy equipment to the Wrocław Psychological and Educational Center through Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects.

With regard to Japan-Poland relations, there were frequent high-level mutual visits. In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Poland, where she paid a courtesy call on President Andrzej Duda, held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski, and exchanged views with Minister of Education Barbara Nowacka. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also visited the Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology, an institution that Japan supported in its establishment. Foreign Minister Kamikawa exchanged views with Polish and Ukrainian students studying at the university, as well as with Ukrainian evacuees residing in Poland. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sikorski held a telephone call in July. After the inauguration of the Ishiba administration, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs Sikorski in November.

In addition, in July, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology MORIYAMA Masahito visited Poland and held a meeting with Minister of Education Nowacka. In August, Minister of Justice KOIZUMI Ryuji visited Poland and held meetings with Minister of Justice Adam Bodnar and Minister of the Interior and Administration Tomasz Siemoniak. In the same month, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Władysław Teofil Bartoszewski visited Japan and held a meeting with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi.

## (8) Ukraine

Based on the strong recognition that Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began in February 2022 is an

outrageous act that shakes the very foundations of the international order, Japan has consistently and strongly promoted support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia since the beginning of the aggression. In 2024 as well, Japan had advanced efforts toward realizing a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, through high-level visits to Ukraine by Japanese dignitaries and cooperation with other countries in various international fora, such as the G7.

On January 7, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Ukraine and paid courtesy calls on President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, and also held a meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba. Foreign Minister Kamikawa conveyed Japan's intention to continue its strong support for Ukraine and exchanged views on directions for cooperation toward recovery and reconstruction. Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited a support facility for women and children established by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), exchanged views with representatives of international organizations stationed in Ukraine among others, and stated that Japan would continue its support so that the people of Ukraine can regain a sense of safety and security in their lives.

On February 19, the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction was held in Tokyo with the participation of Prime Minister Shmyhal in order to provide strong, unified public-private sector support for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction by leveraging knowledge derived from Japan's postwar and disaster reconstruction efforts, as well as advanced technology and knowhow from the private sector. During the conference, Prime Minister Kishida stated that support for Ukraine is an "investment for the future" of Ukraine, Japan, and the world, and noted that Ukraine's recovery and revitalization facing Russian aggression is in the interest of the entire international community.

Moreover, during the Japan-Ukraine Summit telephone call held on April 3, Prime Minister Kishida stated that the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction had been held successfully and expressed his hope to steadily implement the deliverables of the conference.

On February 25, marking two years since the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the G7 Leaders'

Video Conference was convened under Italy's G7 Presidency, with Prime Minister Kishida in attendance. President Zelenskyy participated at the beginning of the conference, and following the conference, a G7 Leaders' Statement was issued expressing the G7's unwavering support for Ukraine.

On April 18, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Japan-Ukraine Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Kuleba on the occasion of the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Foreign Minister Kamikawa emphasized that Japan would continue to demonstrate, at every opportunity, that Japan's unity in support for Ukraine is unwavering.

At the G7 Apulia Summit held from June 13 to 15, the situation in Ukraine was among the topics discussed. Prime Minister Kishida, noting the importance of the G7 continuing to stand united in support of Ukraine, stated that Japan would strongly promote support for Ukraine, especially in reconstruction with a medium- to long-term perspective. During the Summit, Prime Minister Kishida also held a meeting with President Zelenskyy and signed the Accord on Support for Ukraine and Cooperation between the Government of Japan and Ukraine, a bilateral document based on the Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine issued during the NATO Summit in July 2023. This was the first such bilateral document signed by a non-Atlantic country, underscoring that the issue of Ukraine is not merely a European matter, but one that concerns the entire international community.

On June 15, Prime Minister Kishida attended the Summit on Peace in Ukraine held by the Government of Switzerland. He welcomed that this summit took place following the discussions held at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May of the previous year. He emphasized that peace in Ukraine should be a "just and lasting peace" based on international law, including the United Nations (UN) Charter, and should not be the one that justifies unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion as well as achieving a "just and lasting peace" in Ukraine is symbolically important in leading the entire international community toward a world of cooperation, not that of division and confrontation.

On June 11 and 12, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa attended the Ukraine

Recovery Conference, which was co-hosted by the Government of Germany and the Government of Ukraine. He mentioned the steady progress in follow-up efforts stemming from the outcomes of the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction held in February, and expressed Japan's continued commitment to support Ukraine through unified public-private sector effort.

On July 11, during his attendance at the NATO Summit held in Washington, D.C., U.S., Prime Minister Kishida participated in the Japan-Australia-New Zealand-ROK (IP4) + Ukraine Leaders' Meeting, with the participation of President Zelenskyy. Prime Minister Kishida stated that this meeting was meaningful in that it demonstrated that Ukraine is an issue not only for Europe but also for the entire international community, including the Indo-Pacific. The leaders of the countries concurred on continued cooperation between the IP4 countries and Ukraine. On the same day, Prime Minister Kishida also attended the ceremony for issuing the Ukraine Compact and expressed unwavering commitment to continuing strong support



Courtesy call by Foreign Minister Iwaya on President Zelenskyy of Ukraine (November 16, Kyiv, Ukraine)



Japan-Ukraine Foreign Ministers' Meeting (November 16, Kyiv, Ukraine)

for Ukraine based on the bilateral documents signed between each country and Ukraine.

On September 23, during the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with President Zelenskyy. Prime Minister Kishida stated that two and a half years ago, when Russia's aggression began, he decided to firmly stand up against the outrage that shook the foundation of the international order with a strong sense of crisis that "Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow," and that Japan would continue to do its utmost to support Ukraine. On the same day, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, who was also attending the UN General Assembly, held a meeting with Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha.

On October 25, the G7 Leaders' Statement on Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) Loans was issued. Under the ERA framework and as part of the approximately 50 billion U.S. dollars concurred upon by the G7, Japan announced that it would provide 471.9 billion Japanese yen, equivalent to approximately 3.3 billion U.S. dollars,<sup>(4)</sup> in yen loans.

On November 16, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Ukraine and conveyed to the Ukrainian side that under the newly formed Ishiba administration as well, Japan will never waver in its position of standing with Ukraine. Foreign Minister Iwaya also discussed the dispatch of soldiers from North Korea to Russia and concurred on strengthening cooperation during his courtesy call on President Zelenskyy and meeting with Foreign Minister Sybiha. Regarding the "Victory Plan" explained by President Zelenskyy, Foreign Minister Iwaya conveyed Japan's support for the earliest possible realization of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, as stated in the "Victory Plan." In his courtesy call on Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, Foreign Minister Iwaya signed the Agreement on the Security of Information between

Japan and Ukraine, which will serve as the institutional basis for information sharing between the two governments. Furthermore, during his visit, Foreign Minister Iwaya held exchanges of views with First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy Yuliia Svyrydenko and other officials related to mine action, and attended the ceremony for Japan's provision of power-related equipment to Ukraine, expressing that Japan would continue to strongly promote support for Ukraine.

On November 16, just before the 1,000th day since the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the G7 leaders issued the G7 Leaders' Statement on Enduring support for Ukraine, expressing their determination to stand in solidarity in support of Ukraine's fight for sovereignty, freedom, independence, territorial integrity, and reconstruction.

On December 16, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy Svyrydenko, who visited Japan to attend the Ninth Japan-Ukraine Economic Joint Meeting, held meetings with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi and Foreign Minister Iwaya. Foreign Minister Iwaya conveyed his expectations that Japanese companies' participation in the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine would make further progress through the Economic Joint Meeting, and that Japan would continue to support Ukraine.

On December 25, Prime Minister Ishiba held his first summit telephone call with President Zelenskyy. The two leaders exchanged views on the situation surrounding Ukraine, including the involvement of North Korean soldiers in combat. Prime Minister Ishiba expressed his intention to continue to cooperate with Ukraine to realize a just and lasting peace in Ukraine as soon as possible. The two leaders concurred that they would continue to work closely together.

<sup>(4)</sup> The dollar-denominated equivalent amounts of each contribution are calculated based on the exchange rate released by the EU as of September 19.

## COLUMN

## A Transforming EU and the Advancement of the Japan-EU Security Partnership

Mission of Japan to the European Union

## ■ A Transforming EU

The European Union (EU) is currently undergoing a transformation from a mere economic union to a global security provider. One of the pillars of the foundation of the EU is the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which emphasizes the strengthening of international security and the promotion of universal values. In addition, the EU has developed the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Under the CSDP, recognizing that instability of the international environment outside the EU can lead to increased threats within the bloc, the EU has deployed numerous military and civilian missions beyond its borders as initiatives to promote international peace and security.

Furthermore, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has forced the EU to change even more as it confronts the reality of war once again in Europe. At the same time, new expectations are being placed on the EU's role. Given the investment gap in the defense industry following the end of the Cold War in Europe, the EU has formulated the European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) and begun efforts to strengthen its defence industrial base. In July, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who was reappointed for a second term, called on EU member states to seize the opportunity to build a true defense union. The European Commission has also taken a new direction, including establishing a Commissioner responsible for Defence and Space, a position equivalent to that of a minister.

## ■ The Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership

Against the above backdrop, the relationship between the EU and Japan, which continues to transform over time, is also moving toward a new stage. In 2024, amid growing recognition that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific is inseparable, the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership was announced. Utilizing the existing framework of cooperation, the partnership aims to further develop areas of cooperation and dialogue related to security and defense.

The areas of cooperation set out in this partnership are wide-ranging. They encompass not only traditional fields such as military and civilian missions, maritime security, disarmament and non-proliferation, and countering terrorism and violent extremism, but also non-traditional fields such as cyber, hybrid threats including Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), and the defense industry, which is a priority for Europe. As the areas of cooperation expand, the challenges of the increasingly wide-ranging EU organizations involved have become more apparent. In addition to the European External Action Service (EEAS), which serves as the EU's foreign ministry, there is also the involvement of the European Council, alongside the European Commission and the EU member states. Moreover, in many cases, authority and financial resources for concrete cooperation are solely in the hands of the EU member states.

## ■ The diversity and complexity of the EU

The diversity of these areas of cooperation and the complexity of EU organizations present difficulties when considering or negotiating Japan-EU cooperation. However, they are also strengths unique to the EU, which has a deeply rooted multilayered bureaucracy based on the rule of law, the economic scale of its 27 EU member states, and a powerful single internal market. The Mission of Japan to the European Union, based in Brussels, Belgium - home to the EU headquarters - has established a Security and Defense Unit. The political and defense officials there work together to strengthen Japan-EU cooperation at the forefront. In addition, in the context of cyber, hybrid threats, and the defense industry, further inter-ministerial cooperation is also necessary. Going forward, Japan will continue to advance Japan-EU security and defense cooperation initiatives through a concerted national effort that spans multiple ministries, based in Brussels which is considered the heart of Europe.



Foreign Minister Iwama and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission Josep Borrell Fontelles announcing the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership (November 1, Iikura Guest House, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo)



## COLUMN

## Japan's Partner at the Center of Europe

— History and Future of 160 Years of Exchanges between Japan and Alsace

Consulate General of Japan in Strasbourg

From 2023 to 2024, Japan and Alsace in France celebrated the 160th anniversary of their exchanges. Alsace, which has a history of hardship as it swayed between French and German control, has now become a symbol of the reconciliation between France and Germany as well as European integration. This column introduces the long-standing exchanges between Alsace and Japan.

## ■ The Initial Encounter and the Legacy of Exchanges

The first encounter between Japan and Alsace dates back to the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate. In 1863, merchants from Osaka visited Mulhouse, a city with a developed textile industry, and commissioned the production of woolen fabrics featuring traditional Japanese patterns. The following year, the textiles from Mulhouse arrived in Japan, marking the beginning of exchanges. This coincided with the period of the rise of Japonisme in France, when Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints and distinct designs captured the French imagination.



Ginkgo trees in a square in Strasbourg

In the 1880s, Japanese exchange students began coming to the University of Strasbourg, which was then part of Germany, for scientific studies. Around 1900, it is also said that Emperor Meiji gifted ginkgo trees to German Kaiser Wilhelm II, and these trees still stand beautifully in a square in the city of Strasbourg today.

The next major leap in Japan-Alsace exchanges came in the 1980s. At the time, local people in Alsace actively sought to attract Japanese companies spreading over Europe, resulting in a major Japanese electronics manufacturer expanding into the region in 1986. This sparked a wave of Japanese companies setting up operations in the Colmar area. As a result, the number of Japanese companies and residents in the region increased, leading to the opening of the Japanese school “Lycée Seijo d’Alsace” in 1986 and the establishment of the Consulate General of Japan in Strasbourg in 1992. André Klein,

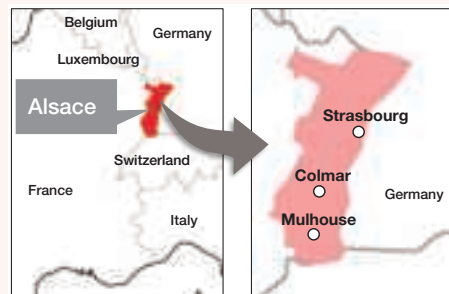
who led these efforts, placed importance on not just attracting Japanese companies but also deepening economic and cultural exchanges in a dual approach. His strong conviction ultimately led to the founding of the Centre Européen d’Etudes Japonaises d’Alsace (CEEJA) in 2001. CEEJA continues to play a key role in fostering Japan-Alsace exchanges today.

In the academic sphere, the Department of Japanese Studies was established at the University of Strasbourg in 1986. In 2001, the Maison Universitaire France-Japon and the Strasbourg Office of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) were successively established. Today, the University of Strasbourg has agreements with around 30 Japanese universities, and inter-university exchanges are thriving.

## ■ Journey Toward the Future

As a concluding event for the 160th anniversary, the “JapanWeek” was held in November 2024 in Colmar to showcase Japanese culture. Over the course of a week, many people from both France and Japan enjoyed cultural exchanges through Japanese culture.

Looking ahead, Alsace wine will be served at the France Pavilion of the 2025 World Exposition (Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan) and the opening of the “Musée Européen du Manga et de l’Anime” is planned for Colmar in 2027. Exchanges between Japan and Alsace are expected to further deepen in a wide range of fields, including the economy, culture, and academia. In every era, such exchanges are supported by the efforts and dedication of the people involved. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to support the development of these exchanges.



A performance held during the “JapanWeek” (November, Colmar, France)

### 3 Collaboration with Regional Institutions

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

NATO is an organization that aims to ensure the freedom and security of its member countries through political and military means, including collective defense, based on the North Atlantic Treaty. In addition to “deterrence and defense” of its member countries, NATO engages in “crisis prevention and management” beyond its borders, such as peacekeeping activities and counter-terrorism efforts, in response to crises that could pose direct security threats to its member countries, and “cooperative security” through collaboration with partner countries and institutions. In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, NATO adopted a new “Strategic Concept” in 2022, which presented guidelines for enhancing dialogue and cooperation with partners in the Indo-Pacific. Amid NATO's growing interest in the Indo-Pacific, cooperation between Japan and NATO has become even more important based on the recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable.

The Indo-Pacific partners (IP4: Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea (ROK)) were invited for the first time to the NATO Summit and Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in 2022. In April 2024, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto attended the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and in July, Prime Minister Kishida participated in the NATO Summit for the third consecutive year on behalf of Japan. At

the Summit, it was announced that in order to establish lasting cooperation between the IP4 and NATO, flagship projects would be pursued in four areas: (a) support to Ukraine, (b) cyber defense, (c) hostile information, including disinformation, and (d) technology. In the meeting held between Prime Minister Kishida and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, both leaders welcomed the flagship projects. In September, during the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, in which the leaders concurred on continuing to cooperate toward the further development of the Japan-NATO relationship. In October, the defense ministers of the IP4 were invited for the first time to the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence. Defense Minister NAKATANI Gen attended on behalf of Japan and held a meeting with the newly appointed NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, who assumed his position on October 1.

#### (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 participating 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 enhance 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



Joint Press Occasion between Prime Minister Kishida and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg at the NATO Summit (July 11, Washington, D.C., U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

intermittently since August 2015, and dispatches ended in February 2022). Additionally, in October 2024, Japan co-hosted the OSCE Asian Conference in Vienna as the chair country of the Asian partners for co-operation. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge attended the conference and spoke on the importance of strengthening cooperation between OSCE participating countries and the Asian partner countries.

Japan has been attending the OSCE Ministerial Council every year. State Minister for Foreign Affairs FUJII Hisayuki participated in the council held in December in Malta. At the council, he stated that Japan will further strengthen cooperation with the OSCE, which addresses 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. In September, Alain Berset assumed the position of Secretary General of the CoE. 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. Japan also participates as an Associate Member in the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, a mechanism established to record damage caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In addition, in November, Japan also made a policy statement at the World Forum for Democracy. Moreover, in May, the Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI), in which Japan participates as an observer, adopted the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, the first international legally binding instrument on AI.

### **(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 (a) politics, (b) economy, and (c) 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. As part of these efforts, from February to September, on-site surveys were conducted in four countries (Indonesia, Thailand, Kazakhstan, and Sweden) under the joint project between ASEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) entitled "Addressing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) by strengthening primary health care (PHC): Piloting the WHO AMR People-Centred Approach in priority countries." In November, the "High-level Meeting on Risk Communication for Public Health Emergencies" was held in Singapore. As part of ASEF's "Project for Strengthening Preparedness and Response to the COVID-19 and other Emerging Infectious Diseases" with financial contributions by Japan, Japan has supported the stockpiling initiative conducted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in several Asian countries (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and the Philippines). In addition, Japan decided to provide financial support through WHO for infectious disease countermeasures for Ukrainian displaced persons, to be provided to Ukraine and its neighboring countries that accept Ukrainian displaced persons (ASEM partner countries: Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Bulgaria, non-ASEM partner country: 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.



## COLUMN

## Japan's Support for Ukrainian Displaced Persons in Romania

### — The Japanese Embassy as a Bridge of Support

Embassy of Japan in Romania

Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began in February 2022, continues to have a significant impact on neighboring countries.

Since the onset of the aggression, a cumulative total of approximately 10.5 million Ukrainians (as of November 2024) have entered Romania, which shares a border with Ukraine. The Government of Romania has provided temporary protection measures to approximately 170,000 Ukrainians. In addition, despite having limited prior experience in receiving displaced persons, the Government of Romania has worked on various support efforts in cooperation with international organizations and NGOs, including facilitating access to healthcare, providing educational opportunities for children, and helping with integration into Romanian society. Even now, nearly 1,000 days since the aggression began, approximately 80,000 Ukrainians continue to live as displaced persons in Romania. In this regard, Romania can be considered one of Ukraine's neighboring countries most heavily impacted by Russia's aggression.

The Government of Japan, through support to international organizations and Japanese NGOs, has been assisting not only Ukrainian displaced persons in Romania but also the host communities within Romania that support them.

The Embassy of Japan in Romania supports the activities carried out by international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which are implemented with funding from the Government of Japan, as well as initiatives to support Ukrainian displaced persons by Japanese NGOs including Good Neighbors Japan, Save the Children Japan, and Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development (NICCO). To bolster these efforts, the Embassy visits the sites of support activities, identifies how Japan's support is being utilized and any challenges, leverages this information for future support, and actively communicates to the public, thereby working to make Japan's support more visible.

To help Ukrainian displaced persons living in Romania regain their peaceful daily lives as soon as possible, the Embassy of Japan in Romania will continue to actively work as a bridge connecting various Romanian support organizations with Japanese society, thereby contributing to the support of both Ukrainian displaced persons and host communities.



Vice President of the House of Councillors NAGAHAMA Hiroyuki (foreground left) and others receive an explanation from Pablo Zapata, the Acting representative of UNHCR Romania, on how Japan's support is being used at a Ukrainian displaced persons support center (September 4, Bucharest, Romania; Photo: UNHCR Romania)



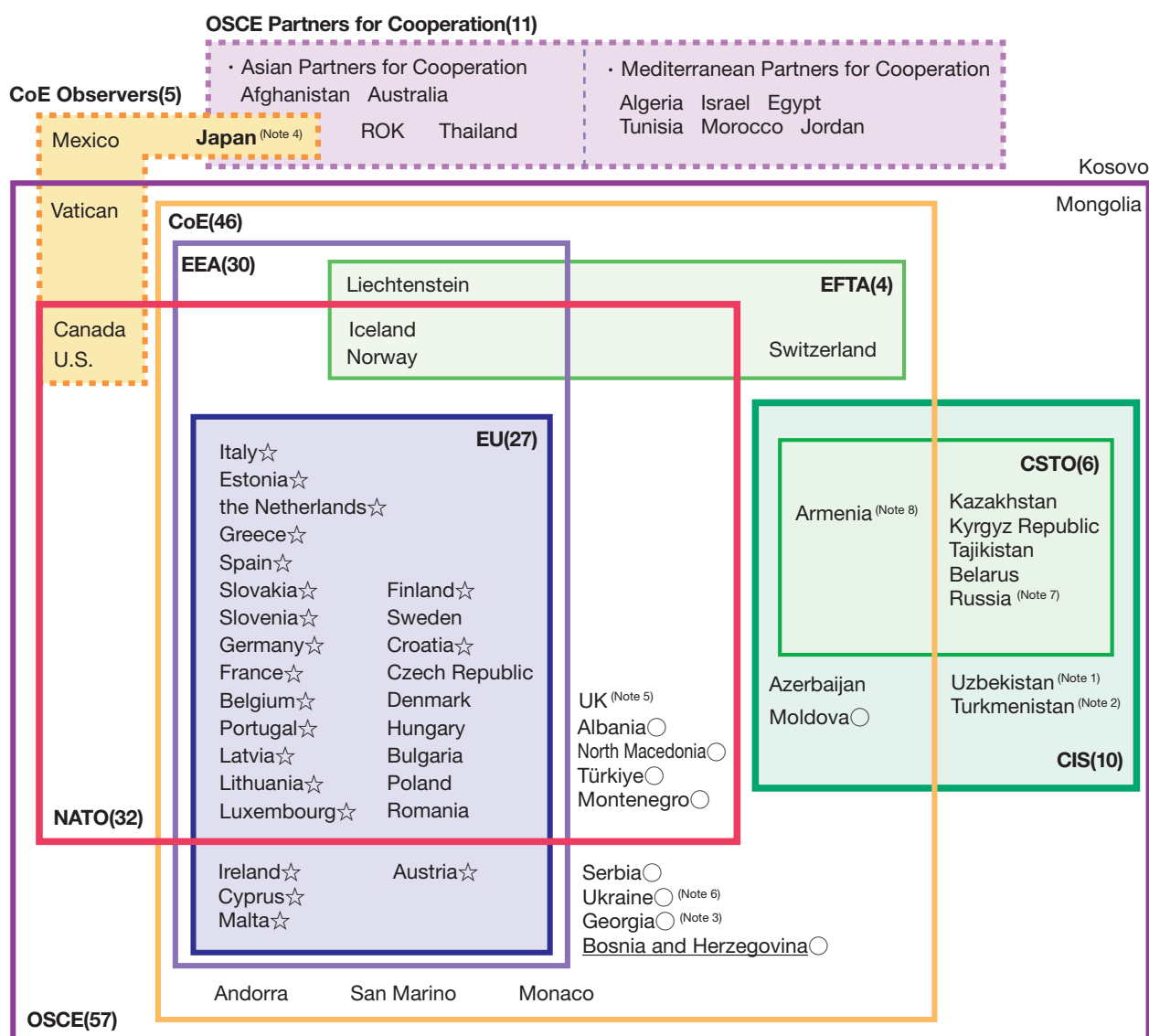
Ambassador of Japan to Romania Katae visits an educational facility for Ukrainian children supported by UNICEF Romania, guided by Representative Anna Riatti (May 20, Bucharest, Romania; Photo: UNICEF Romania)



Ambassador Katae exchanges views with parents at an educational facility for Ukrainian children supported by Save the Children Japan (April 22, Năvodari, Romania)



## Major Frameworks of Europe



( ) Indicates number of member countries

### <Legend>

○ : Candidate to be an EU member

☆ : Euro member states

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

(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.

(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

(Note 8) In February 2024, Armenia announced the suspension of its participation in the CSTO.

### <Abbreviations>

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:** On November 30, a general parliamentary election was held. The Social Democratic Alliance became the largest party, and Kristrún Frostadóttir was appointed as Prime Minister.

**Sweden:** In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Stockholm and held a meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Tobias Billström. In July, Prime Minister Kishida, during his visit to the U.S. to attend the NATO Summit, held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, and both leaders concurred on further strengthening bilateral cooperation in all areas, including security.

**Denmark:** In July, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Industry and Trade of the Faroe Islands, Høgni Hoydal, who was visiting Japan. In October, a delegation from the Foreign Policy Committee of the Danish Parliament visited Japan and paid a courtesy call on Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa.

**Norway:** In July, during her visit to Laos to attend the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide.

**Finland:** In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Helsinki and held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Elina Valtonen. In July, during his visit to the U.S. to attend the NATO Summit, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with President Alexander Stubb, and both leaders concurred on further strengthening bilateral cooperation in all areas, including security and the economy. In December, Prime Minister Ishiba held a meeting with Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, who was visiting Japan, and announced the commencement of negotiations on the Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology.

### Benelux countries

**The Netherlands:** In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited the Netherlands, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Mark Rutte, and held a Japan-Netherlands Foreign Ministers' Meeting, during which both sides shared the recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable. In July, Prime Minister Kishida held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Dick Schoof during the NATO Summit in the U.S.. Prime Minister Kishida welcomed the Netherlands' concrete engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, including the dispatch of the frigate *HNLMS Tromp* to Japan, and confirmed that they would continue working together in all areas, including security. In September, the Japan-Netherlands Peace Exchange Program was held, and five Dutch civilians who had been interned by the Japanese military during World War II were invited to visit Japan.

**Belgium:** In May, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs Hadja Lahbib, during which both sides concurred on strengthening Japan-Belgium bilateral relations and cooperation toward Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and the 160 Years of Friendship between Japan and Belgium in 2026. The two ministers also exchanged views on regional affairs and concurred on working together.

**Luxembourg:** In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting in Tokyo with Vice Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, and Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, Xavier Bettel, who was visiting Japan. The two ministers shared the view that the close relationship between the Imperial Household and the Grand Ducal Household is the cornerstone of excellent bilateral relations and concurred on further deepening friendly bilateral relations. Prior to the meeting, the two ministers exchanged notes verbales concerning the introduction of the Japan-Luxembourg Working Holiday Programme. In June, the Luxembourg Economic Mission led by Crown Prince Guillaume of Luxembourg visited Japan and held meetings with Prime Minister Kishida and Foreign Minister Kamikawa. Prior to the meeting between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Crown Prince Guillaume, a signing ceremony was held for the Japan-Luxembourg Air Services Agreement and the Memorandum of Cooperation between relevant ministries and agencies in the field of Space Activities for Peaceful Purposes.

### Baltic countries

**Estonia:** In March, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Margus Tsahkna, who was visiting Japan as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In July, Prime Minister Kaja Kallas stepped down from her position as Prime Minister after being nominated to become EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the new administration led by Prime Minister Kristen Michal was inaugurated.

**Latvia:** In February, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a foreign ministers' meeting and another meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Krišjānis Karinš, who was visiting Japan as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Lithuania:** In May, a presidential election was held, and incumbent President Gitanas Nausėda was re-elected after a runoff with Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė.

**Ireland:** On November 29, a general election was held, and Fianna Fáil – The Republican Party became the party with the most seats. On January 23, Micheál Martin was appointed as Prime Minister by the lower house of Ireland's parliament.

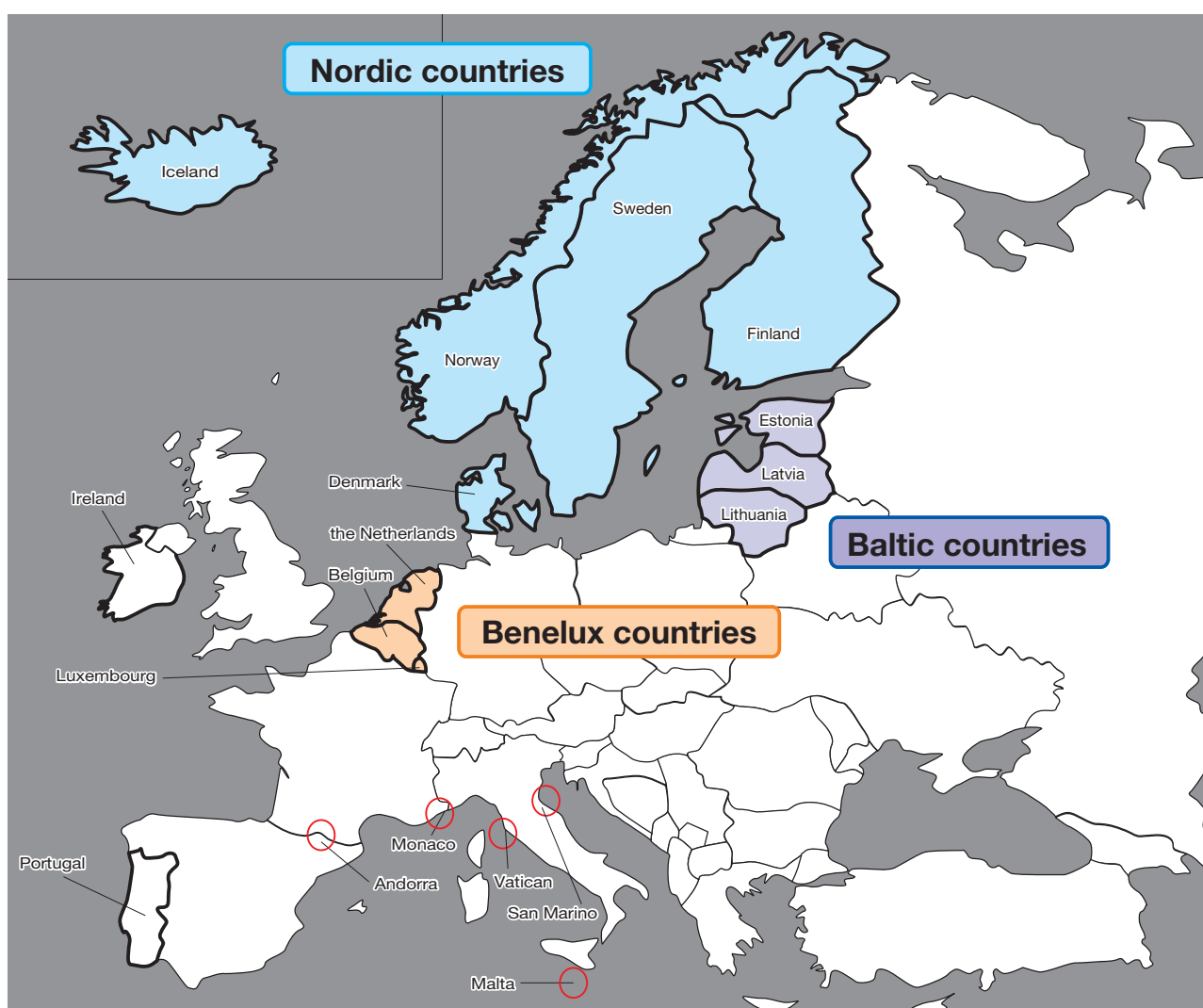
**San Marino:** As Heads of State of San Marino, Alessandro Rossi and Milena Gasperoni took office in April, followed by Captains Regent, Francesca Civerchia and Dalibor Riccardi in October. In June, a general election for the Grand and General Council of San Marino was held, and in July, the second Beccari administration was inaugurated under Minister of Foreign Affairs, Political Affairs, International Economic Cooperation and Digital Transition Luca Beccari.

**The Vatican:** In December, Archbishop of Tokyo Tarcisius KIKUCHI Isao was appointed Cardinal by Pope Francis. (Cardinals are ranked just below the Pope and have the right to vote in papal conclaves. There are now two incumbent Japanese Cardinals, including Cardinal Thomas Aquinas Manyo Maeda, Archbishop of Osaka-Takamatsu.)

**Portugal:** On March 10, a general election for the Assembly of the Republic was held, in which the opposition Democratic Alliance (AD), led by the Social Democratic Party (PSD), narrowly defeated the ruling Socialist Party (PS). PSD leader Luís Montenegro became Prime Minister.

**Malta:** On January 1, the Embassy of Japan in Malta was opened. In February, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa visited Malta and paid courtesy calls on Deputy Prime Minister Chris Fearn and Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation Clifton Grima. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa also held a meeting with Permanent Secretary Christopher Cutajar of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism. The two sides confirmed further progress in bilateral relations toward the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Malta in 2025. With Permanent Secretary Cutajar, a memorandum of cooperation on people-to-people exchanges was signed with the aim of accelerating bilateral coordination toward the introduction of a working holiday program. In December, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii visited Malta to attend the 31st OSCE Ministerial Council, during which he paid a courtesy call on President Myriam Spiteri Debono of Malta and held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism Ian Borg. Both sides concurred on continuing to closely cooperate to further develop bilateral relations.

**Monaco:** In Monaco, where interest in Japanese culture is growing, "Monaco-Japan Artistic Encounters" was held in November for the first time in four years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In September, Didier Guillaume was newly appointed as Minister of State (equivalent to Prime Minister).



## V4

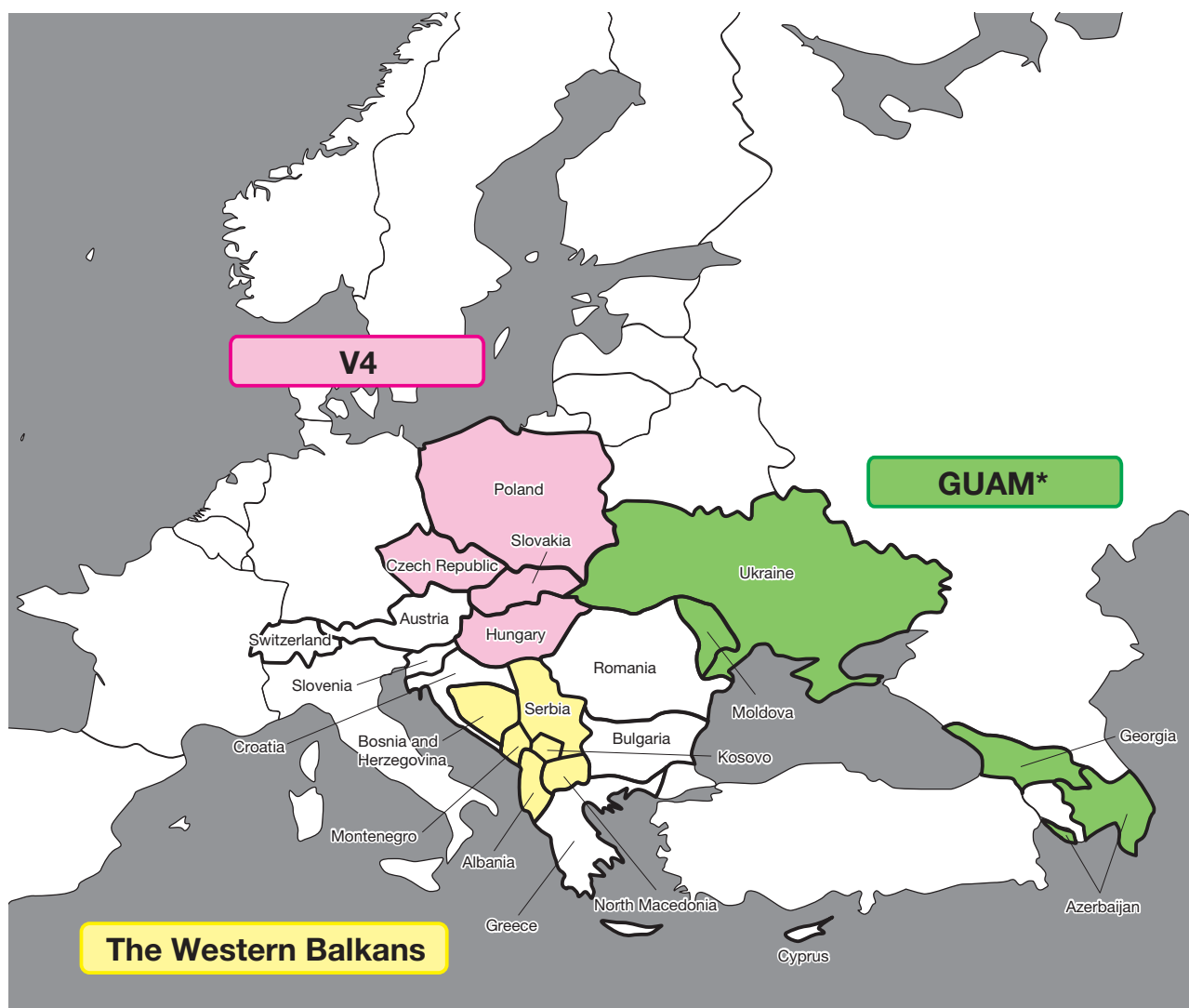
Bilateral relations between Japan and the V4 countries of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary have a long history and are traditionally friendly. Cooperation with the V4, which are neighboring countries of Ukraine, is important for Japan as it continues to support Ukraine. Through the "V4+Japan" cooperation framework, Japan has collaborated with the V4 in a wide range of fields.

**Slovakia:** There were exchanges at various levels between Japan and Slovakia. In February, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge held a meeting in Brussels with State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Marek Eštok. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy Denisa Saková as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment Tomáš Taraba also visited Japan. In September, Vice President of the House of Councillors NAGAHAMA Hiroyuki visited Slovakia and held a meeting with Chairman Marián Kéry of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council.

**Czech Republic (V4 Chair until June):** In February, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge exchanged views with Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Lipavský in Brussels. Later in the same month, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Foreign Minister Lipavský held a foreign ministers' meeting in Tokyo, during which they signed the Japan-Czech Republic Air Services Agreement.

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

**Hungary:** In May, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó, who was visiting Japan for the second consecutive year.



\* GUAM: GUAM (acronym for Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) was established by four countries of the former Soviet Union to promote democracy and stable economic development. Japan established the "GUAM+Japan" cooperation framework in 2007, and has held foreign minister-level and vice-minister-level meetings, as well as theme-based workshops with professionals and experts from GUAM countries, as part of invitation programs to Japan.



## The Western Balkans

In the Western Balkans region, despite ongoing concerns about peace implementation and ethnic conflicts, including the 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. In addition, under the “Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative”<sup>(5)</sup> which Japan has led since 2018, Japan has been promoting support for economic reforms of Western Balkan countries aiming for EU membership and reconciliation and cooperation among the region's various ethnic groups through the promotion of bilateral dialogues with each Western Balkan country as part of bilateral cooperation; development cooperation through Official Development Assistance (ODA); programs that facilitate expansion by Japanese companies as well as sharing knowledge and inviting personnel to Japan to address common regional challenges as part of regional cooperation promotion and cooperation with third-party countries. As part of the invitation programs, in November, practitioners from the Western Balkans and Greece were invited to Japan under the theme of tourism. In December, under the MIRAI program, an exchange program with Europe, youth were invited to Japan under the theme of peacebuilding (in cooperation with the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans). In February, the third Bulgaria-Japan-Western Balkans Workshop “Improving Disaster Risk Management Understanding” was held.

**Albania:** In July, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa visited Albania and held a meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Igli Hasani. Also in July, a delegation from the House of Representatives conducting a study on diplomacy and political/economic conditions in European countries visited Albania and paid courtesy calls on Prime Minister Edi Rama and others.

**North Macedonia:** In March, the leaders and foreign ministers of Japan and North Macedonia exchanged commemorative messages to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Macedonia. In October, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Zoran Dimitrovski during the OSCE Asian Conference held in Austria.

**Kosovo:** In April, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora Donika Gërvalla visited Japan and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Kamikawa. In July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa became the first Japanese foreign minister to visit Kosovo, where she paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Albin Kurti and held a meeting with Minister Gërvalla. To mark the 15th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Kosovo, commemorative events were held in both countries.

**Serbia:** In April, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs HOSAKA Yasushi visited Serbia and paid a courtesy call on First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić. In July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Serbia and held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Marko Đurić, in which the two ministers concurred on launching negotiations for a Japan-Serbia bilateral investment treaty. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Miloš Vučević, and held an exchange of views with Tatjana Macura, Minister without portfolio in charge of gender equality, prevention of violence against women and economic and political empowerment of women.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** In July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Bosnia and Herzegovina and held meetings with Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmedin Konaković, Chairwoman of the Council of Ministers Borjana Krišto, and High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Christian Schmidt.

**Slovenia:** In April, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon, who was visiting Japan.

**Romania:** In March, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs Luminița Teodora Odobescu. In September, Vice President of the House of Councillors Nagahama visited Romania and met with President of the Senate Nicolae Ciucă and Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu.

**Bulgaria:** In April, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Hosaka visited Bulgaria. In August, a delegation from the Japan-Bulgaria Parliamentary Friendship Association of the House of Councillors visited Bulgaria. In addition, in September, Speaker of the House of Representatives NUKAGA Fukushima visited Bulgaria and held meetings with National Assembly Chair Raya Nazaryan, President Rumen Radev, and Prime Minister Dimitar Glavchev.

**Croatia:** In June, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa met with Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Gordan Grlić Radman in Berlin. Later in the same month, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa visited Croatia and attended the Dubrovnik Forum.

**Austria:** In January, the Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Austria on Social Security, which had been under intergovernmental negotiations, was signed. In April, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with Federal Minister for European and International Affairs Alexander Schallenberg. In October, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge visited Vienna to attend the OSCE Asian Conference and met with Secretary-General of the Ministry for European and International Affairs Nikolaus Marschik. In the same month, the 26th meeting of the Japan-Austria Committee for Issues of the Future was held in Graz, Austria, with a focus on hydrogen and AI.

**Switzerland:** In August, President Viola Amherd visited Japan, and both countries celebrated the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Switzerland through a summit meeting and other events. In October, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge visited Switzerland to attend the Ukraine Mine Action Conference in Lausanne. State Minister Tsuge also held a meeting with Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Ignazio Cassis, in which both sides exchanged views on bilateral relations and regional affairs including Ukraine and concurred on strengthening cooperation as like-minded countries.

**Greece:** The year 2024 marked the 125th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Greece and was designated the “Year of Culture and Tourism Between Japan and Greece,” leading to increased exchanges between the two countries. (See the Column on page 147.) In July, a delegation from the House of Representatives, National Diet of Japan, conducting a study on diplomacy and political/economic conditions in European countries, visited Greece and engaged in inter-parliamentary exchanges, including a meeting with the Greece-Japan Parliamentary Friendship League. In December, the Tax Convention between Japan and the Hellenic Republic entered into force.

**Moldova:** In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa participated in the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Moldova Partnership Platform held in Chișinău by sending a written message. In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a foreign ministers' meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mihai Popșoi, who was visiting Japan, and stated that Japan would continue to support Moldova, which is affected by Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

(5) 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

## Visit to the United Kingdom by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan

Following a long-standing invitation, Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan visited the United Kingdom (UK) from June 22 to 29. The Japanese Imperial Family and the British Royal Family have shared ties over many years, and the governments and peoples of the two countries have conducted a wide variety of exchanges. Given these accumulated exchanges and the fact that the UK is fondly remembered by Their Majesties as the country where they studied abroad, the visit showed the deep friendship and goodwill between Japan and the UK, both domestically and internationally.

During the three-day period from June 25 to 27, Their Majesties were welcomed as State Guests. They attended a Ceremonial Welcome at Horse Guards Parade (the parade ground of the Household Cavalry), a luncheon held by His Majesty King Charles III at Buckingham Palace, and a State Banquet given by Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla. Along The Mall on the way from the Ceremonial Welcome to the luncheon, the flags of Japan and the UK were flown, and Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress received a grand welcome from the many people lining the route as they rode in a state carriage alongside Their Majesties the King and Queen. In his address at the banquet, His Majesty the Emperor stated, "It is my sincere hope that both Japan and the UK, as friends like no other, will continue to make untiring efforts for true mutual understanding through exchanges of their people, thereby building an enduring relationship based on friendship, goodwill and cooperation."

On June 28, Their Majesties visited Oxford. After visiting Balliol College, where Her Majesty the Empress once studied abroad, Their Majesties attended a luncheon held by the Chancellor of Oxford University, The Rt Hon the Lord Patten of Barnes. During his remarks at the luncheon, His Majesty the Emperor stated, "It is my wish that all the... students, academics and researchers from the United Kingdom and countries all over the world, including Japan, will continue to inspire and uplift each other, pointing the way towards a brighter future not just for our two countries but for the whole world." Following the luncheon, Her Majesty the Empress was awarded an honorary degree. Their Majesties also visited Merton College, where His Majesty the Emperor studied in the past, and planted cherry trees.

His Majesty the Emperor also attended a reception with members of the Japanese community and friends of Japan in the UK, where he met with individuals who have contributed to promoting the Japan-UK relationship. He also visited Japan House London and the Thames Barrier, one of the world's largest movable flood barriers. At the banquet held by the Lord Mayor of London and City of London Corporation on June 26, His Majesty shared stories from his time studying at Oxford University, when he conducted research on the history of water transport on the River Thames.

This visit marked the third official State Visit to the UK by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress in the history of Japan-UK relations. Symbolizing the Japan-UK partnership, the visit further deepened the friendship, goodwill, and cooperative relations between the two countries.



His Majesty the Emperor and His Majesty the King at the State Banquet (June 25, Buckingham Palace, UK; Photo: British Royal Family)



Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress visiting Balliol College (June 28, Oxford, UK; Photo: Oxford University)

## COLUMN

## The 125th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Greece

### — Strategic Partners Connected by the “Sea”



#### ■ Japan-Greece Relations

Japan and Greece established diplomatic relations through the conclusion of the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation in 1899. As nations that share fundamental values and engage in global maritime transport, Japan and Greece began exchanges through the “sea” and have built up friendly relations over many years in various fields. In recent years, mutual visits by dignitaries have become more frequent, and in-person Japan-Greece Foreign Ministers’ Meetings were held three times in 2018, 2019, and 2022. In 2023, 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 a joint statement to elevate Japan-Greece relations to a “strategic partnership.” In the economic field, the Tax Convention between Japan and the Hellenic Republic was signed in the same year. After ratification by both countries’ parliaments, the Tax Convention entered into force in December 2024. It is expected to further promote bilateral investment and economic exchange. In addition, as a member of both the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Greece also shares with Japan various common interests, including the maintenance and strengthening of the free and open international order based on the rule of law at sea. Japan-Greece relations are expected to continue developing not only in bilateral cooperation but also in the international arena.



Japan-Greece Summit Meeting (January 30, 2023, Prime Minister’s Office; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

#### ■ The 125th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Greece: “Year of Culture and Tourism Between Japan and Greece”

Japan and Greece are both major global tourism nations with rich cultures. 2024 marked the 125th anniversary of the countries’ bilateral relations, and was designated as the “Year of Culture and Tourism Between Japan and Greece” (as agreed upon during the Japan-Greece Summit Meeting in January 2023). This led to an increase in bilateral exchanges. The visit to Greece by Her Imperial Highness Princess Kako of Akishino in May was a highlight of this commemorative year and served as a major opportunity to demonstrate the friendly relations between the two countries both domestically and internationally. Her Imperial Highness met with President Katerina Sakellariopoulou as well as Prime Minister Mitsotakis and his wife, and attended various events such as the “Commemorative Ceremony for the 125th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Greece and Year of Culture and Tourism Between Japan and Greece.”



President Sakellariopoulou and Her Imperial Highness Princess Kako of Akishino (May 28, Athens, Greece; Photo: Presidency of the Hellenic Republic)

As part of the commemorative events for the Year of Culture and Tourism, a variety of highly popular events were held in Greece, including *Noh* performances, lectures by renowned architects, film festivals, and events related to Japanese cuisine, anime, martial arts, traditional Japanese clothing, woodblock prints, and more. Many events were also held in Japan, including a celebration for the special binding edition publication of Greek literary master Nikos Kazantzakis’ *Travelling Japan*, which was held during the visit of Greek Minister of Tourism Olga Kefalogianni, a photo exhibition by a renowned photographer themed on Greece, and a diplomatic archives exhibition co-hosted with the Embassy of Greece in Japan at the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Through such a wide range of commemorative events in the fields of culture and tourism, the friendship between Japan and Greece has deepened further.

Japan, which faces the Pacific Ocean, and Greece, which is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, are geographically distant. However, the relationship that has been cultivated through the “Year of Culture and Tourism Between Japan and Greece” serves as a solid foundation for the two countries to work closely together in the international community to address common challenges and further advance their relations.