

Section 5 Europe

1 Overview

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

European countries, the European Union (EU), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) 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 four years, threatening the existing international order and intensifying geopolitical competition, it is becoming increasingly clear that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific is inseparable. In such circumstances, in order to respond to the challenges to the values and principles shared by Japan and Europe, and to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law, it is becoming ever more important to strengthen cooperation with European countries, the EU, and NATO. In addition, as the international coordination in addressing global issues such as climate change is required, the need for cooperation with the EU and European countries has become even greater.

European countries pursue common policies across a wide range of fields such as diplomacy and security, economy, and fiscal policy, through various frameworks including the EU. They also play an important role in formulating standards in the international community. The countries also shape international public opinion, drawing on their language, history, cultural and artistic activities, as well as their extensive media and think tank networks. 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 continued its support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia in coordination with the G7 and the international community in order to achieve a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. Japan has demonstrated solidarity with Ukraine at various levels including the leaders' and ministerial levels, including through the Japan-Ukraine Summit Meeting in June and the hosting of the Ukraine Mine Action Conference in October, and has provided support in close cooperation with Ukraine.

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 has continued to provide economic assistance such as macro financial assistance, defense equipment support through the European Peace Facility,⁽¹⁾ and training of Ukrainian soldiers through the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine).⁽²⁾ In June, the EU institutionalized a new financial assistance scheme providing Ukraine with a new loan facility utilizing the proceeds from frozen Russian assets, and at the Ukraine Recovery Conference held in July, announced a new reconstruction support package totaling 2.3

(1) 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.

(2) 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 Ukrainian military.

billion euros. Furthermore, at the European Council held in December, agreement was reached on providing 90 billion euros in loans, in light of Ukraine's funding needs in the first half of 2026, when liquidity is expected to be particularly tight. NATO has continued to coordinate the provision of training and equipment to Ukrainian military personnel through the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU), and in February established the NATO-Ukraine Joint Analysis, Training and Education Centre (JATEC), promoting the collection and analysis of lessons learned (lessons from combat), the practical implementation of those lessons, and the strengthening of interoperability with NATO. At the NATO Summit in June, the Allies reaffirmed their enduring support for Ukraine, and in July a mechanism was established for the transfer of the United States (U.S.)-made military equipment to Ukraine via NATO. The United Kingdom (UK) and France led the establishment of a coalition of the willing on Ukraine, holding meetings at various levels including at the summit level. In March, the UK transferred the first tranche (752 million pounds) of 2.26 billion pounds in military aid to Ukraine. In December, it announced a contribution of 10 million pounds to the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund. Since the start of the aggression, total support has amounted to 21.8 billion pounds. France announced additional military support of approximately 2 billion euros in March and continues to demonstrate its commitment to providing assistance across all areas — military, humanitarian, and economic — for as long as necessary. On the occasion of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine's visit to France in November, France announced the signing of an agreement concerning Ukraine's purchase of French-made defense equipment. Italy co-hosted the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Rome in July with Ukraine, and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni emphasized Italy's commitment to continued support, stating that total reconstruction funding commitments at the conference exceeded 10 billion euros.

<Multilayered, Tailored Diplomacy with Europe>

In Europe, the importance of values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, as well as respect for the rule of law and international law, is being increasingly recognized amidst the

response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. On the other hand, a tailored approach is required that takes into account the diversity of European countries and their respective circumstances. Japan supports a strong and united Europe and conducts multilayered and tailored diplomacy with European countries.

Throughout 2025, Prime Minister Ishiba and Prime Minister Takaichi held meetings with the leaders and officials of Iceland, Ireland, Armenia, Italy, Ukraine, the UK, Austria, the Netherlands, Croatia, Kosovo, Slovakia, Serbia, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Vatican, Hungary, Finland, France, Bulgaria, Portugal, Moldova, Montenegro, Latvia, Lithuania, and Luxembourg, thereby confirming close cooperation with European countries.

In July, Japan held the 30th Japan-EU Summit, during which both sides confirmed that they would deepen cooperation across a wide range of fields, including politics and security, defense, economic security, and strengthening competitiveness.

In April, Prime Minister Ishiba held a meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, who visited Japan, and confirmed that Japan-NATO cooperation would be further strengthened. In June, Japan received an invitation to the NATO Summit for the fourth consecutive year, and Foreign Minister Iwaya attended the NATO Summit in The Hague, the Netherlands.

As for legal frameworks in the security field, the Japan-Italy Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Italy ACSA) was signed with Italy in November 2024 and entered into force in September 2025. In addition, the Japan-Netherlands Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Netherlands ACSA) was signed with the Netherlands in December of the same year.

Furthermore, Japan conducts public diplomacy activities including dispatch of experts, cooperation with European think tanks, and Japan's Friendship Ties Programs "MIRAI" which promote intellectual and people-to-people exchange by inviting young people from Europe to Japan. These activities are aimed to promote a better understanding of Japan and Asia and mutual understanding. Japan is also 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 450 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>

Under the new leadership launched in December 2024, in 2025 the EU tackled the strengthening of European defense as its top priority. In March, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen announced the ReArm Europe Plan, which rests on three pillars: (1) an increase in defense spending through the relaxation of debt limits; (2) the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) instrument, which provides loans of approximately 150 billion euros to member states; and (3) the mobilization of private capital. Also in March, the EU published the White Paper for European Defence presenting solutions to build a strong defense industrial base, and stated that opportunities should be explored for defense industry cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners, including Japan. The situation in Ukraine remained one of the EU's top priorities; however, at the European Council meetings (EU Summit Meetings) in March and June, Hungary opposed the conclusions document on the situation in Ukraine, and the leaders of the 26 member states excluding Hungary published a document they supported, reflecting differences in positions among member states. The EU has provided humanitarian, financial, and military assistance to Ukraine totaling 177.5 billion euros (as of October 1, 2025). In 2025, under its new leadership, the EU held summit meetings with non-member states in quick succession; notably in May, it held the first-ever EU-UK Summit since the UK's withdrawal from the EU in 2020, confirming that both sides would work together to strengthen European security and defense.

<Japan-EU Relations>

Japan and the EU are strengthening 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), which formally entered into force in January 2025.

In July, Prime Minister Ishiba held the 30th Japan-EU Summit with the President of the European Council Costa and the President of the European Commission von der Leyen, who visited Japan. Japan and the EU concurred to steadily implement cooperation in the fields of cyber, defense industry, maritime security, space, and information, based on the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership announced in November 2024. Both sides also concurred to promote concrete cooperation across a wide range of fields including the launch of the “Japan-EU Competitiveness Alliance,” economic security, industrial policy, innovation policy, and energy.

In April, the 2nd Japan-EU Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue was held, during which Foreign Minister Iwaya and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas reaffirmed their shared recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific is inseparable. Foreign Minister Iwaya also stated that Japan highly commended the fact that the White Paper for European Defence explicitly referenced the strengthening of security and defense cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners, including Japan. Foreign Minister Iwaya held meetings with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kallas on the occasion of the Munich Security Conference and also on the occasion of the 30th Japan-EU Summit.

In November, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs ERI Arfiya attended the “4th EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum” held in Brussels and stressed the importance of upholding and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law, in the context that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific is inseparable.

The EU is also an important economic partner of Japan. With an economic scale second only to that of the U.S., the EU ranks third among Japan's import partners, third among its export partners, and



30th Japan-EU Summit (July 23, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)



2nd Japan-EU Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue (April 4, Brussels, Belgium)

first in terms of the balance of direct investment in Japan. Under the massive economic zone accounting for approximately 20% of global GDP that was created when the Japan-EU EPA entered into force in 2019, the ties between Japan and the EU have further strengthened. With regard to the Japan-EU EPA, six years have now passed since the agreement entered into force; in order to further develop Japan-EU trade, which has been on an upward trend, both sides have ensured the steady implementation and operation of the agreement across its various fields through specialized committees and working groups on trade in goods, technical barriers to trade, trade in services, investment, and electronic commerce, government procurement, trade and sustainable development, regulatory cooperation, and other areas. As another initiative to promote a broader strategic partnership with the EU, in May, Foreign Minister Iwama, together with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry MUTO Yoji and EU Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, and Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency Maroš Šefčovič, held the 6th Japan-EU High-Level Economic



6th Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue (May 8, Tokyo)

Dialogue, at which they confirmed the importance of cooperation in the field of economic security, cooperation for the resilience of supply chains, and Japan-EU cooperation in maintaining the rules-based multilateral free trade system centered on the World Trade Organization (WTO). Japan will continue to promote efforts toward the further development of Japan-EU economic relations, including the steady implementation of the joint statement and related documents of the Japan-EU Summit, the continued utilization of the Japan-EU EPA, and cooperation in the Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue.

(2) United Kingdom

In May, local elections were held in England, in which Reform UK, the right-wing populist party led by leader Nigel Farage, won a significantly larger number of seats than the Conservative Party or the Labour Party. In June, the Starmer administration successively announced a National Security Strategy, an Industrial Strategy, and a Trade Strategy. The National Security Strategy announced a “NATO First” policy while designating the Indo-Pacific as the priority region following Europe and the Atlantic, and positioned Japan as a vitally important partner for security in the Indo-Pacific region and the world. In September, a cabinet reshuffle was carried out following the resignation of Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Angela Rayner, who had been criticized for underpayment of stamp duty on a property purchase. Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs David Lammy was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, and Yvette Cooper



Japan-UK Summit Meeting (January 31, 2026, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

(former Secretary of State for the Home Department) was newly appointed as Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs.

There was an active dialogue between the governments of Japan and the UK at various levels, including the summit and foreign minister levels. Prime Minister Ishiba held a telephone meeting with Prime Minister Keir Starmer in April, and discussed a wide range of issues in broad and detailed terms, primarily in the economic field, taking into account the impact of U.S. tariff measures. Prime Minister Takaichi held a meeting with Prime Minister Starmer on the occasion of the G20 Johannesburg Summit in November.

In January 2026, Prime Minister Starmer visited Japan for the first time and held a meeting with Prime Minister Takaichi. The two leaders concurred that they would further strengthen cooperation in all fields as “Enhanced Global Strategic Partners,” and issued a joint statement on the “Japan-UK Strategic Cyber Partnership.”

In March, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Lammy and Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds visited Japan, and together with Foreign Minister Iwaya and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Muto, they held the first-ever Japan-UK Economic 2+2 Ministers’ Meeting (“Economic 2+2”). Foreign Minister Iwaya held meetings with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Lammy on the occasion of Secretary Lammy’s visit to Japan in March and during the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in the same month. In addition, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone meeting with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and

Development Affairs Cooper in September. Foreign Minister Motegi held a meeting with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Cooper on the occasion of the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in November.

In the field of security, in June, Edgewing, a joint venture responsible for the airframe design and development of the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP), a program being jointly developed by Japan, the UK, and Italy, was established in the UK. From August to September, the UK Carrier Strike Group (CSG25) led by the aircraft carrier *HMS Prince of Wales* called at Yokosuka and Tokyo, and numerous events including the Pacific Future Forum (PFF) were held aboard the vessels.

In the cultural field, on the occasion of the UK National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai in May, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport Lisa Nandy visited Japan and the launch of the “Musubi” Initiative — a new UK initiative for promoting people-to-people exchanges between Japan and the UK — was announced. This initiative is expected to foster the next generation of leaders in Japan and the UK through scholarship support, sports and cultural exchanges, and the promotion of women’s advancement in business. Foreign Minister Iwaya also released a video message welcoming the initiative.

(3) France

In December 2024, President Emmanuel Macron appointed François Bayrou, a partner in the governing coalition, as Prime Minister following the resignation of the Barnier Cabinet after a motion of no confidence was passed. Prime Minister Bayrou attempted major spending cuts and other measures, but was unable to obtain support in parliament, and on September 8, a vote of confidence in the cabinet was rejected in the French National Assembly. Consequently, Prime Minister Bayrou submitted his resignation, and the Bayrou Cabinet resigned en masse. On the following day, September 9, President Macron appointed Minister for the Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu as the new Prime Minister, and on October 5, the Lecornu Cabinet was inaugurated. However, criticism of the cabinet appointments came from opposition parties and others, and with insufficient support,

Prime Minister Lecornu submitted his resignation to President Macron on the following day, October 6. Subsequently, President Macron reappointed Lecornu as Prime Minister on October 10, and following consultations with the governing and opposition parties, the Second Lecornu Cabinet was inaugurated on October 14. Although a motion of no confidence was submitted by opposition parties, Prime Minister Lecornu announced, among other measures, a temporary suspension of pension reform, and the motion of no confidence was rejected.

With respect to foreign affairs, France is committed to continuing support for Ukraine and strengthening sanctions against Russia in response to its aggression against Ukraine. President Macron is playing a leading role in mobilizing international support for Ukraine. In February, an emergency European summit on the security of Ukraine and Europe was held. In March, a summit on peace and security for Ukraine was also held in Paris, and France is holding meetings with the UK and others in what are known as the “Coalition of the Willing.” In August, President Macron, together with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine and the leaders of other related European countries, visited Washington, D.C. (U.S.) and discussed the situation surrounding Ukraine with U.S. President Donald J. Trump.

With regard to the situation in the Middle East, France supports a two-state solution as the only resolution that can guarantee lasting peace in the region, including Gaza, and is making concrete contributions. Together with Saudi Arabia, France convened the High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution from July 28 to 30, and issued the “New York Declaration.”

With regard to Japan-France relations, Foreign Minister Iwaya and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noël Barrot held foreign ministers’ meetings on the occasion of the G20 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in February and the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in March, respectively. In April, Prime Minister Ishiba held a summit telephone meeting with President Macron, and the two leaders discussed in broad and detailed terms regarding the economic field, including in light of the impact of U.S. tariff measures and China’s retaliatory measures against them on the



Japan-France Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (November 12, Niagara, Canada)

global economy and the multilateral trading system. In May, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited France and held a foreign ministers’ meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Barrot. At the meeting, the two ministers highly commended Japan-France cooperation in the security field in the Indo-Pacific region and welcomed the progress in cooperation for ensuring stable supply of rare earths and other critical minerals in the field of economic security. They concurred that Japan and France, as “Exceptional Partners” sharing values and principles, would work more closely together. The two ministers further confirmed that both countries would work together on preparations for the upcoming milestones, namely the 30th anniversary of the *Maison de la culture du Japon à Paris* in 2027, the 170th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and France in 2028, and the 100th anniversary of the *Maison du Japon* of the *Cité internationale universitaire de Paris* in 2029. Foreign Minister Iwaya also paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Bayrou. Foreign Minister Iwaya also held a telephone meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Barrot in September. Foreign Minister Motegi held a meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Barrot on the occasion of the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in November. Prime Minister Takaichi exchanged views with President Macron on the occasion of the G20 Johannesburg Summit in November.

Furthermore, the France Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai was visited by many people, and numerous government officials, local government representatives, and private sector representatives from France also attended, contributing to the strengthening of bilateral relations.

(4) Germany

In November 2024, the Scholz administration (Social Democratic Party (SPD)) saw the Free Democratic Party (FDP) withdraw from the government that month due to policy conflicts including over fiscal policy, resulting in a two-party minority administration composed of the SPD and the Green Party. In December of the same year, Chancellor Olaf Scholz submitted a motion of confidence in himself to the Bundestag (national parliament), which was rejected, and he proposed to President Frank-Walter Steinmeier that the Bundestag be dissolved to allow for an early federal election. Following consultations with the governing and opposition parties, the President dissolved the Bundestag on December 27, and a federal election was set to be held on February 23, 2025. As a result of the federal election, the opposition Christian Democratic Union of Germany and Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CDU/CSU) returned as the largest party, and following coalition negotiations with the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which fell back to third place, a coalition agreement was reached in April. On May 6, CDU leader Friedrich Merz was elected Chancellor in the Bundestag, and a coalition government of the CDU/CSU and SPD was inaugurated. In the same election, the far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD), which advocates strict immigration policies and other measures, surged to become the second largest party.

Regarding foreign policy, Chancellor Merz has emphasized his determination to work closely with European countries and play an active role in the EU. With regard to the situation in Ukraine, Chancellor Merz visited Ukraine together with the leaders of the UK, France, and Poland shortly after taking office, and continues to actively promote support for Ukraine, including by providing the surface-to-air missile system “Patriot weapon system.” Prior to the inauguration of the government, in March, an amendment to the Basic Law was enacted at the proposal of the CDU/CSU and SPD, making it possible to increase defense expenditure. At the NATO Summit in June, Germany announced its goal of meeting the core defense requirement of 3.5% of GDP by 2029, significantly front-loading the target agreed upon by the participating countries, thereby actively working to



Japan-Germany Summit Meeting (November 23, Johannesburg, South Africa; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

strengthen security in response to the current international situation. Germany also attaches importance to relations with like-minded countries including Japan in the Indo-Pacific region; in September, the “Meeting between Europe and Indo-Pacific Partners” was hosted by Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul in New York, U.S., and Foreign Minister Iwaya attended.

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 after the inauguration of the Merz administration as well. In June, a Japan-Germany Summit Meeting and a Japan-Germany Foreign Ministers' Meeting were held, and President Steinmeier visited Japan on the occasion of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai and held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba. In August, Foreign Minister Wadephul visited Japan and held the 1st Japan-Germany Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue with Foreign Minister Iwaya. In November, Prime Minister Takaichi, who visited South Africa to attend the G20 Johannesburg Summit, held the first-ever Japan-Germany Summit Meeting with Chancellor Merz. In the field of security, in September, Japan Air Self-Defense Force F-15 aircraft and others made their first stopover in Germany, further advancing the existing cooperation that has been promoted through the reciprocal dispatch of both countries' assets and the entry into force of the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Germany ACSA). In the field of economic security as well, cooperation is deepening, including through the Second Meeting of the Japan-Germany Economic Security Consultations held in Tokyo in October 2025,

established by agreement between the leaders in July 2024. The Japanese-German Center Berlin, which serves as the foundation for Japan-Germany intellectual and people-to-people exchanges, celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2025, and in October, Foreign Minister Wadephul visited the Center and delivered a lecture; in December, a public discussion on Japan-Germany relations was held jointly with the Japanese-German Forum.

(5) Italy

The administration of Prime Minister Meloni has maintained a stable political base as a right-wing government, while continuing a cooperative policy with Europe and the U.S. on the diplomatic and economic fronts. 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 also responded to domestic labor shortages by expanding the quota for legal entries from outside the EU.

With Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai also taking place in 2025, many dignitaries from Italy visited Japan, invigorating exchanges between the two countries. President Sergio Mattarella's official visit in March was the first visit to Japan by an Italian head of state in 16 years. At his meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, the two leaders announced the "Japan-Italy Action Plan Fact Sheet," and confirmed that the two countries would further strengthen bilateral relations across a wide range of fields in anticipation of the 160th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Italy diplomatic relations in 2026. In May, a summit telephone meeting was held between Prime Minister Ishiba and Prime Minister Meloni, at which the two leaders concurred on deepening cooperation in international fora including the G7 and further developing the favorable Japan-Italy relationship going forward. In November, Prime Minister Takaichi held a summit telephone meeting with Prime Minister Meloni. On the occasion of the 160th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, in January 2026, Prime Minister Meloni visited Japan as a Working Visit guest. At the summit meeting, Prime Minister Takaichi and Prime Minister Meloni concurred on designating the bilateral relationship as



Japan-Italy Summit Meeting (January 16, 2026, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

a "Special Strategic Partnership," aiming to take the relationship to an even higher level in order to further promote relations between the two countries across a wide range of fields.

Foreign Minister Iwaya and Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Tajani held a foreign ministers' meeting on the occasion of the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in March, and confirmed that cooperation would be strengthened in a wide range of fields including security and the economy.

In the field of security, from March to April, the Italian Navy frigate ITS *Antonio Marceglia* called at Yokosuka and Osaka. In addition, the Japan-Italy Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Italy ACSA), for which negotiations began in June 2024 and which was signed in Rome by Foreign Minister Iwaya and Minister of Defence Guido Crosetto in November of the same year, entered into force in September 2025 following deliberations in the Diet in Japan.

(6) Spain

Under the third Sánchez administration, the economy has performed strongly, recording economic growth that significantly exceeds the EU average (3.5% for Spain in 2024 compared to the EU average of 1.0%), and defense expenditure has been raised to 2% of GDP. Although 56% of Spain's power mix consists of renewable energy, a large-scale blackout that occurred in April brought to light technical challenges accompanying the expansion of renewable energy introduction, such as overvoltage.

With regard to Japan-Spain relations, the two countries are strengthening their cooperation under the Strategic Partnership announced by the leaders of the

two countries in 2018. In May, Minister of Industry and Tourism Jordi Hereu visited Japan to participate in Spain's National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Luis Planas Puchades also visited Japan. In June, a delegation of the Spain-Japan Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Spanish Senate, led by First Vice President of the Senate Javier Maroto Aranzábal, visited Japan and paid courtesy calls on President of the Senate SEKIGUCHI Masakazu and Chief Cabinet Secretary HAYASHI Yoshimasa. In the same month, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs MATSUMOTO Hisashi, who attended on behalf of the Government of Japan the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), an international conference held in Seville to discuss development finance toward achieving the SDGs, held a meeting with State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs Diego Martínez Belío of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation. In September, Minister of Economy, Trade and Business Carlos Cuerdo Caballero visited Japan for the second consecutive year following July of the previous year, and held a meeting with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Muto, confirming that both sides would continue to cooperate toward strengthening economic relations between the two countries.

In April, the Japan-Spain Business Co-operation Committee was held in Tokyo for the first time in approximately two years, and in October, the 25th Japan-Spain Forum was held in Barcelona, promoting public-private cooperation in both Japan and Spain.

Defense cooperation and exchanges between the two countries are also steadily deepening and expanding. In July, the Spanish Navy frigate *Méndez Núñez*, participating in Operation HIGHMAST conducted by the UK-led Carrier Strike Group (CSG25), called at Yokosuka and Kure. In addition, on the occasion of the 9th Japan-Spain Vice-Minister-level Political Consultations held in Tokyo in November, both sides welcomed the conclusion of an agreement in principle on the Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology between Japan and Spain.

(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.

With regard to Japan-Poland relations, 2025 saw frequent visits to Japan by Polish dignitaries. In February, Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski visited Japan and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya, and the signing ceremony for the "Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategic Partnership Between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Poland for the years 2025-2029" was held. In April, Minister of National Education Barbara Nowacka visited Japan and exchanged views with Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology ABE Toshiko. In July, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Digital Affairs Krzysztof Gawkowski visited Japan and held meetings with Minister of Digital Transformation TAIRA Masaaki and Minister in charge of Economic Security KIUCHI Minoru. On October 1, on the occasion of Poland's National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Deputy Marshal of the Sejm Monika Wielichowska visited Japan.

(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 continued its support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia. In 2025 as well, Japan has pursued efforts toward the realization of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine through coordination with other countries in international fora including the G7.

On February 24, marking the third year since the start of the aggression, Prime Minister Ishiba attended online the "International Summit on the Support of Ukraine," hosted by the Government of Ukraine in hybrid format, and stated that he hoped that diplomatic efforts by each country toward realizing peace would bring an end to the long years of combat and a breakthrough out of the difficult situation.

On April 3, on the occasion of the NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Andrii Sybiha

and conveyed that it was important for Ukraine's diplomatic efforts to lead to the realization of a just and lasting peace, and that Japan would strongly urge Russia to respond positively, while coordinating with Ukraine and the G7.

On June 17, Prime Minister Ishiba, who was attending the G7 Kananaskis Summit, held his first in-person meeting with President Zelenskyy. Prime Minister Ishiba stated that Japan would continue to work closely with the international community and the G7 to support Ukraine's efforts toward achieving a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, and would continue its support for Ukraine. The two leaders concurred that they would continue to work closely together.

On July 10, State Minister for Foreign Affairs FUJII Hisayuki attended the "Ukraine Recovery Conference" co-hosted by the Government of Italy and the Government of Ukraine, and in his statement emphasized that Russia's aggression against Ukraine is not a distant European issue for Japan, but a matter that goes to the very nature of the international order. On the same day, July 10, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii also attended the Ukraine Donor Platform Ministerial Meeting, where he described Japan's contributions to Ukraine and stated that Japan would continue to coordinate closely with the international community and fully support Ukraine's efforts.

On August 4, Deputy Prime Minister Taras Kachka and Foreign Minister Sybiha visited Japan to participate in Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. On the same day, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Foreign Minister Sybiha. Foreign Minister Iwaya underlined Japan's commitment to supporting Ukraine's efforts toward achieving a just and lasting peace in Ukraine as soon as possible, and the two ministers had a candid exchange of views on the latest situation surrounding Ukraine and international efforts, and concurred that they would continue to work closely together.

Prime Minister Ishiba participated in the "Virtual Leaders Meeting of the Coalition of the Willing on Ukraine" held on August 13, August 17, August 19, and September 4. At each meeting, Prime Minister Ishiba stated that the early realization of a full ceasefire and a just and lasting peace in Ukraine was the common goal of all countries, and that like-minded countries needed to unite in their response toward that

end. He also stated that Japan, as part of its contribution, would continue its support for Ukraine in coordination with the international community, working closely with Ukraine, the U.S., and European partner countries.

On September 24, on the occasion of the UN General Assembly, the Fifth Summit of the Crimea Platform was hosted by the Government of Ukraine, and Foreign Minister Iwaya read out a message issued by Prime Minister Ishiba on behalf of Japan. The message conveyed that Japan supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea, and would reaffirm to the international community the principle that unilateral changes to the status quo by force is unacceptable. It also expressed Japan's determination to actively engage in discussions in order to draw a swift and positive response from Russia that leads to a just and lasting peace.

In order to accelerate Ukraine's mine action and raise the international momentum for recovery and reconstruction, Japan held the Ukraine Mine Action Conference (UMAC2025) in Tokyo on October 22 and 23. Foreign Minister Motegi attended the opening session on the 22nd and delivered a speech emphasizing that landmines are hindering Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction, and that strengthening countermeasures is Japan's responsibility in its support for Ukraine. At the conference, Foreign Minister Motegi also announced the "Ukraine Mine Action Support Initiative" as Japan's support package, expressing Japan's intention to continue providing various forms of support essential to the reconstruction process, including capacity-building and capacity enhancement support, socioeconomic revitalization, and contributions to the medical and welfare sectors, as well as Japan's intention to strengthen coordination with the international community and to work alongside Ukraine toward achieving more rapid, safe, and sustainable mine action. The outcome document announced at the closing session on the first day, under the conference theme "Acceleration toward Reconstruction," confirmed a shared understanding and future direction regarding key elements for mine action in Ukraine going forward under the three pillars of (1) People, (2) Technology, and (3) Nexus (a seamless integration from mine action to recovery and reconstruction), and reaffirmed the importance of close

coordination among relevant stakeholders, including experts and private sector companies, in addressing the challenges. Furthermore, on December 2, as a specific manifestation of cooperation under the “Ukraine Mine Action Support Initiative,” the notes concerning the Grant Aid “The Programme for Emergency Response on Humanitarian Mine Action and UXO Clearance” were signed and exchanged between the Governments of Japan and Ukraine.

On October 22, Foreign Minister Motegi held a meeting with Minister of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine Oleksii Sobolev, who visited Japan to attend the Ukraine Mine Action Conference, and expressed that Japan’s position of “standing with Ukraine” is consistent and that Japan would continue to do its utmost toward the realization of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, working closely with the international community and the G7.

On October 24, newly inaugurated Prime Minister Takaichi attended the “Virtual Leaders Meeting of the Coalition of the Willing on Ukraine,” co-hosted by the Governments of the UK and France, and stated that Japan’s position of “standing with Ukraine” remains unchanged, and that Japan would continue its support for Ukraine and to impose sanctions against Russia in coordination with the international community, toward the realization of an immediate cessation of hostilities and, ultimately, a just and lasting peace.

On November 5, Prime Minister Takaichi held her first summit telephone call with President Zelenskyy. She underlined that Japan’s stance that “Japan stands with Ukraine” is unchanged, described the support Japan has provided to Ukraine to date, and stated

that Japan would continue to implement support for Ukraine’s recovery and reconstruction. She conveyed that Japan, mindful of the concern that the outcome of the war will affect the international order, would continue to strongly support Ukraine’s efforts toward achieving a just and lasting peace in Ukraine as soon as possible, and the two leaders concurred that they would continue to work closely together.

Japan is also providing support toward Ukraine’s recovery and reconstruction. On February 27, the notes concerning the Grant Aid “the Programme for Emergency Recovery (Phase 4)” were signed and exchanged. Through this cooperation, Japan is providing support in areas such as energy, also utilizing Japanese technology. Furthermore, on April 18, the letters concerning the yen loan “Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) Loan for Ukraine” (loan limit: 471.9 billion yen), to be provided under the framework of the “Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) Loan for Ukraine” agreed upon at the G7 Apulia Summit as budgetary support to the Government of Ukraine facing an economic crisis, were signed and exchanged. In December, Japan announced that it would provide approximately 6 billion U.S. dollars in total to address Ukraine’s financial needs, which are expected to be particularly acute in the first half of 2026. Under this support, in the first half of fiscal year 2026, in addition to the already contributed 85 billion yen related to ERA loans, Japan will contribute a further 193.45 billion yen, and will provide 4.5 billion U.S. dollars in credit enhancement for World Bank loans to Ukraine.



Opening Session of Ukraine Mine Action Conference 2025 (October 22, Tokyo)



Prime Minister Takaichi's Participation in the “Coalition of the Willing Online Leaders’ Meeting on Ukraine” (October 24, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

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 has been focusing on support for Ukraine and the defense of Europe. At the NATO Summit in June 2025, NATO member states agreed on a target of investing 5% of GDP annually by 2035, comprising at least 3.5% of GDP for core defense requirements and up to 1.5% of GDP for defense- and security-related spending.

The NATO Strategic Concept adopted in 2022 sets out guidelines for strengthening dialogue and cooperation with the Indo-Pacific partners (IP4: Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea (ROK)), and cooperation between Japan and NATO has become even more important. Amid this backdrop,



Meeting between Prime Minister Ishiba and NATO Secretary General Rutte (April 9, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

in order to further strengthen and develop Japan-NATO relations, in January 2025, the Mission of Japan to NATO was established as an independent mission, separate from the Embassy of Japan in Belgium.

The IP4 was invited for the first time to the NATO Summit and Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in 2022. Foreign Minister Iwama attended the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in April 2025, marking the fourth consecutive year of attendance by Japan’s Foreign Minister. In the same month, NATO Secretary General Rutte visited Japan as his first visit to the Indo-Pacific region since taking office, held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, and issued a joint statement, confirming that the partnership between Japan and NATO is of strategic importance for both the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific regions. At the NATO Summit in June, Foreign Minister Iwama held a meeting with NATO Secretary General Rutte and concurred on working together to elevate Japan-NATO cooperation to even greater heights across various fields, including the launch of the Japan-NATO Dialogue on Defense Industrial Cooperation and Capabilities. At the meeting held concurrently between Secretary General Rutte and the IP4, the importance of expanding NATO’s engagement with the Indo-Pacific and of concrete cooperation between NATO and the IP4 was confirmed. In September, Chair of the NATO Military Committee Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone visited Japan and held meetings with Minister of Defense NAKATANI Gen and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii. In October, Prime Minister Ishiba, and in December, Prime Minister Takaichi, each held telephone calls with Secretary General Rutte, confirming the importance of cooperation between Japan and NATO and between NATO and the IP4, and their continued commitment to working together on cross-regional security challenges.

(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, and traces its origins to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which was established during the Cold War. Through a comprehensive approach encompassing perspectives that are not only politico-military, but also economic and environmental, and human dimension, and humanitarian perspectives, it conducts conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction, and bridges differences between participating states and fosters trust by providing a forum for political dialogue on a wide range of security issues. The year 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the “Helsinki Final Act,”⁽³⁾ and on various occasions, the key principles enshrined in that document, including sovereign equality, territorial integrity of states, and the peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as the importance of the OSCE's role, were reaffirmed.

Japan has cooperated with the OSCE since 1992 as its first 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 capacity to prevent human trafficking, and to strengthen the leadership capacity of women in conflicts in Ukraine and neighboring countries. Furthermore, the OSCE has been playing an important role in improving the situation in Ukraine even before Russia's aggression began in 2022. Japan has been providing financial support and dispatching experts to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) (experts were dispatched intermittently since August 2015, and dispatches ended in February 2022).

Japan has been attending the OSCE Ministerial Council every year. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs SHIMADA Tomoaki participated in the OSCE Ministerial Council held in December 2025 in Vienna. At the Council, he stated that Japan will further strengthen cooperation with the OSCE, which addresses issues with a comprehensive approach. In addition, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Shimada issued a joint statement regarding the strengthening of cooperation between the OSCE and



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Shimada attending the 32nd OSCE Ministerial Council (December 4 and 5, Vienna, Austria; Photo: OSCE/Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland)

Asian Partners on behalf of the five Asian Partners and 48 participating States.

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

The CoE is an international organization comprising 46 member states in Europe, which has played a key role in establishing international standards in areas concerning democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. As the CoE's sole observer country in Asia since 1996, Japan has contributed to the CoE by providing expertise and supporting the holding of meetings. 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 February, Japan signed 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

⁽³⁾ Helsinki Final Act: A document adopted at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE, the predecessor of the OSCE) in 1975.

three pillars, namely (a) politics, (b) economy, and (c) society and culture.

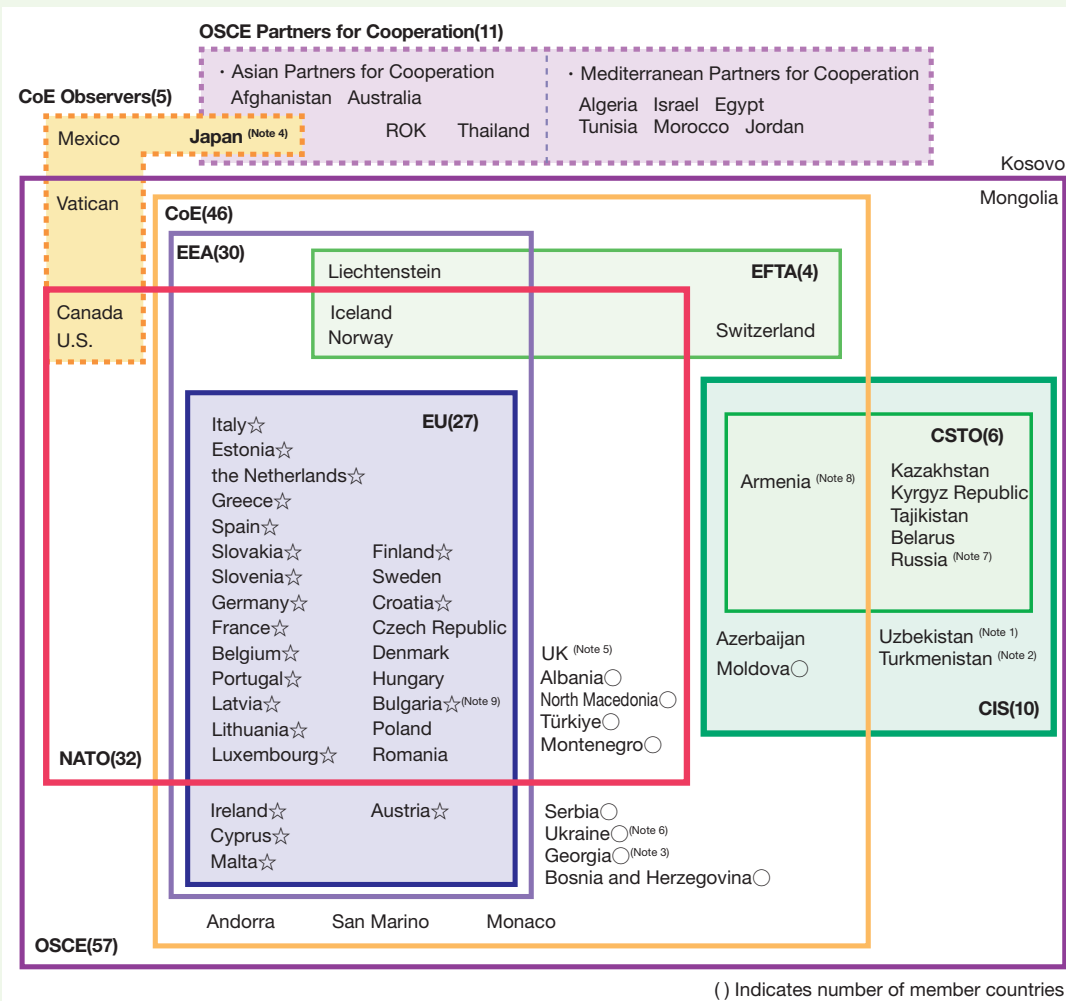
The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is ASEM's only permanent institution. It is located in Singapore and is responsible for activities in the field of society and culture, one of the three pillars.

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, in November, a panel discussion on "Climate Change and Public Health" was held in Singapore, and in December, a "High-level Meeting on Risk Communication for Public Health Emergencies" was held in Berlin. 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), and has supported infectious disease countermeasures for Ukrainian displaced persons through the World Health Organization (WHO) for Ukraine and its neighboring countries that accept Ukrainian displaced persons (ASEM partner countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia; non-ASEM partner country: Moldova).

Furthermore, in 2025, the Government of Japan contributed to ASEM's activities by inviting ASEF Executive Director Beata Stoczyńska to Japan in September, supporting the 6th ASEF Young Leaders Summit held on the sidelines of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, implementing ASEF Classroom Network projects as a co-host, and through its financial contributions to the ASEF.

Major Frameworks of Europe



<Legend>

- : Candidate to be an EU member (9)
- : Euro member states (21)
- : Member states of the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) (1)

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

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

(Note 3) Georgia notified the CIS of its decision to leave the organization in August 2008. It formally withdrew from the CIS in August 2009.

(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.

(Note 9) Bulgaria adopted the euro in January 2026.

<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: In May, President Halla occasion of the Iceland National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba. At the meeting, both sides concurred that they would make further advances in bilateral relations and promote concrete cooperation in a wide range of fields, including security, the Arctic, economy, science and technology, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Iceland in 2026.

Sweden: In April, Foreign Minister Iwaya, who visited Belgium to attend the NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard. In October, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a further foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Stenergard, who visited Japan. At each meeting, the two ministers confirmed that they would further deepen cooperation in a wide range of fields, including nuclear energy, green transition, digital transformation, and life sciences, in addition to security cooperation.

Denmark: In April, Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, who visited Japan, paid a courtesy call on Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi, and both sides confirmed that they would further deepen cooperation in a wide range of fields, including clean energy and quantum science and technology. In addition, in September, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Faroe Islands Sirið Stenberg, who visited Japan, and exchanged views broadly on topics including Japan-Faroe Islands economic relations, concurring that they would continue to communicate closely with a view to further cooperation.

Norway: In 2025, Japan-Norway relations marked the 120th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. In June, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide, who visited Japan to participate in the Norway National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. From August to September, as part of the UK Carrier Strike Group (CSG25), the Norwegian Navy frigate *HNoMS Roald Amundsen* called at Yokosuka and Tokyo. This marked the first-ever call at a Japanese port by a Norwegian Navy vessel. On September 8, parliamentary general elections were held, in which left-wing forces including the Labour Party were victorious, and the left-wing administration led by Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre (Labour Party) continued from October onward.

Finland: In April, Foreign Minister Iwaya, who visited Belgium to attend the NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen and concurred that they would steadily build up cooperation in the fields of security, advanced science and technology, and other areas. In June, Prime Minister Ishiba held a meeting with President Alexander Stubb, who visited Japan to participate in Finland's National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and announced the "Joint statement on Reinforced Cooperation in the Future between Japan and the Republic of Finland." Prime Minister Ishiba and President Stubb also held a summit meeting on the occasion of the UN General Assembly in September.

[Benelux countries]

The Netherlands: In 2025, Japan and the Netherlands marked the 425th anniversary of exchanges. In February, on the occasion of the Munich Security Conference, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp and concurred that they would deepen defense cooperation to ensure security in the Indo-Pacific region. In April, Prime Minister Dick Schoof visited Japan and held summit talks and a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, during which they announced the "Japan-Netherlands Action Plan 2025 based on the Joint Statement on the Establishment of a Strategic Partnership for Sustainable Peace and Prosperity." In May, King Willem-Alexander visited Japan to participate in the official events of the Netherlands National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. In June, the leading coalition party, the Party for Freedom (PVV), announced its withdrawal from the coalition, and Prime Minister Schoof declared the collapse of the cabinet, with the Schoof caretaker cabinet continuing to govern until a new administration was formed. In the same month, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Prime Minister Schoof on the occasion of NATO Summit-related events, and both sides concurred that they would commence negotiations on an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). In August, the coalition party "New Social Contract (NSC)" announced its withdrawal from the coalition, and the party's cabinet ministers, including Foreign Minister Veldkamp, resigned. Subsequently, in September, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Refugee and Migration David Van Weel was newly appointed. In the same month, Prime Minister Ishiba held a Japan-Netherlands Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Schoof on the occasion of the UN General Assembly. Also in September, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs implemented the Japan-Netherlands Peace Exchange Program, inviting six Dutch civilian nationals who had been interned by the Japanese military during World War II to Japan. In October, elections for the House of Representatives were held, and Democrats 66 (D66) became the largest party. Coalition negotiations are to be held going forward, and a new cabinet is scheduled to be inaugurated based on a coalition agreement. In December, the Japan-Netherlands Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Netherlands ACSA) was signed in The Hague, the Netherlands.

Belgium: In April, on the occasion of the NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation Maxime Prévot. Also in June, Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid and her husband His Royal Highness Prince Lorenz visited Japan and visited Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. In September, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Employment, Economy and Agriculture David Clarinval, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation Prévot, and Minister of Public Action and Modernization, in charge of Public Enterprises, the Civil Service, State Real Estate Management, Digital and Scientific Policy Vanessa Matz visited Japan and visited Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, as well as paid a courtesy call on Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi. Foreign Minister Iwaya also held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation Prévot.

Luxembourg: In April, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs Xavier Bettel visited Japan, attended the opening ceremony of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, paid a courtesy call on Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi, and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya. Also in April, Prime Minister Luc Frieden visited Japan, held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, and visited Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. In the same month, a delegation led by Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies Fernand Etgen visited Japan, paid a courtesy call on State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii, and visited Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. From May to June, Grand Duke Henri, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Minister of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs Bettel, and Minister of Defence, Minister for Mobility and Public Works, Minister for Gender Equality and Diversity Yuriko Backes visited Japan and Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai and Prime Minister Ishiba also held a meeting with Grand Duke Henri. On October 3, Grand Duke Henri abdicated in favor of Crown Prince Guillaume, and Grand Duke Guillaume acceded to the throne.

[Baltic countries]

Estonia: In March, the second Michal Administration, comprising the Estonian Reform Party and the Estonian 200 Party, was inaugurated following the dissolution of the coalition with the Social Democratic Party. In April, Foreign Minister Iwaya, who was visiting Belgium to attend the NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held a meeting with Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna.

Latvia: In May, a meeting was held between President Edgars Rinkēvičs, who visited Japan, and Prime Minister Ishiba, and the two leaders issued a joint statement designating the bilateral relationship as a Strategic Partnership. In September, a meeting was held between Foreign Minister Baiba Braže, who visited Japan, and Foreign Minister Iwaya.

Lithuania: In June, President Gitanas Nausėda visited Japan and held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba. In July, Prime Minister Gintautas Paluckas resigned, and in September, Prime Minister Inga Ruginienė took office, and a coalition government comprising the Social Democratic Party, the Dawn of Nemunas, and the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union was inaugurated. In October, Foreign Minister Kęstutis Budrys visited Japan to attend the Ukraine Mine Action Conference 2025 and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Motegi.

Ireland: In July, Prime Minister Ishiba held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Micheál Martin, who visited Japan, and both sides concurred that they would promote concrete cooperation across a wide range of fields—including security encompassing the cyber domain, economy, agriculture, digital, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges—and further develop bilateral relations ahead of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2027. In the same month, the Irish Government formally opened “Ireland House Tokyo,” a complex facility housing the Embassy, trade and tourism promotion agencies, and an event space.

San Marino: As the heads of state of San Marino, Captains Regent Denise Bronzetti and Italo Righi took office in April, and on the occasion of the San Marino National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai on May 3, both Captains Regent visited Japan.

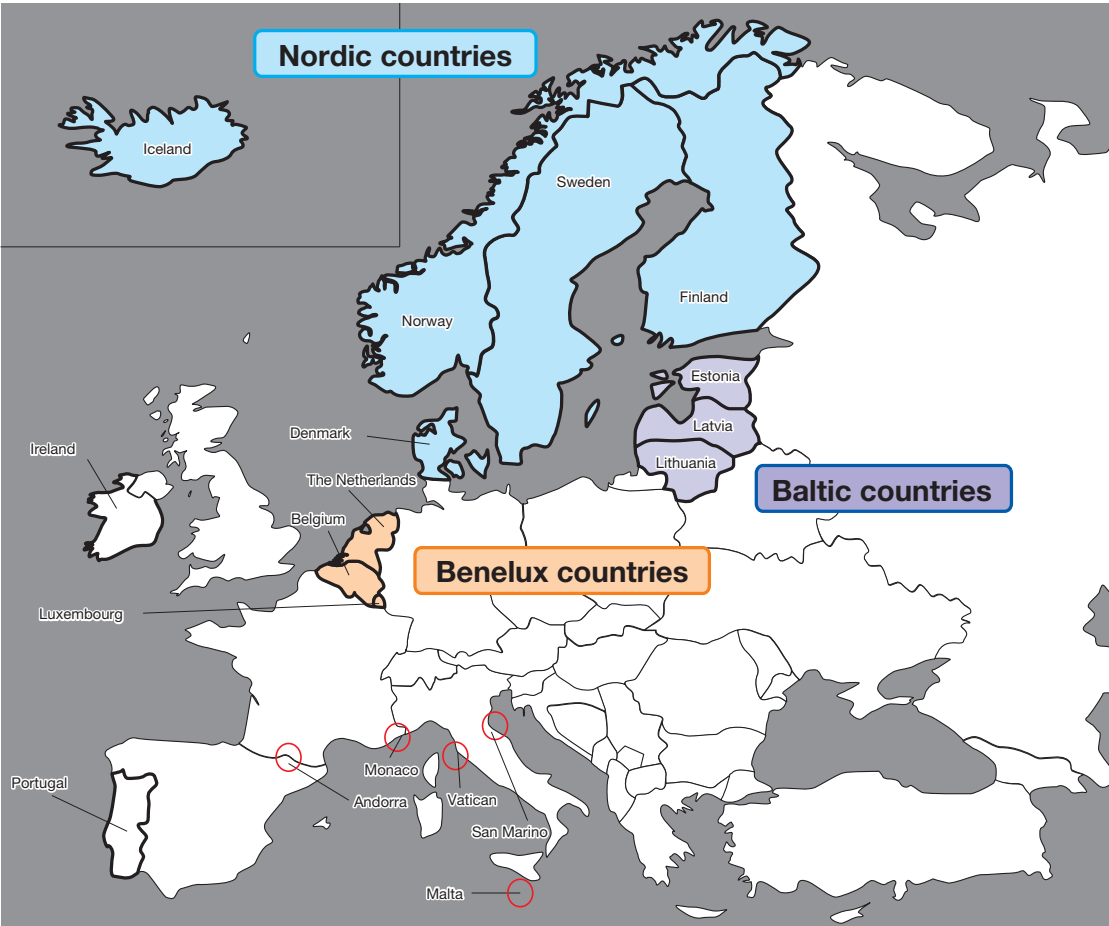
The Vatican: Pope Francis passed away on April 21, and Foreign Minister Iwaya attended the funeral Mass held at Vatican City on April 26 as the representative of the Government of Japan. Subsequently, as a result of the Conclave (papal election), Pope Leo XIV was elected as the 267th Pope on May 8, and the Solemn Ceremony of the Inauguration of the Pontificate for Pope Leo XIV was held at Vatican City on May 18, which former Prime Minister ASO Taro attended as Ambassador on Special Mission on behalf of the Government of Japan.

On the occasion of the Vatican's National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai on June 29, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, visited Japan and held a Japan-Vatican Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, the first such meeting since 2022.

Portugal: In March, the government resigned en masse after a motion of confidence in the Montenegro administration was rejected by parliament, and President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa dissolved parliament. In the general election for the Assembly of the Republic held in May, the Democratic Alliance (AD) led by the ruling Social Democratic Party (PSD) maintained its position as the largest party, though right-wing forces made significant gains. In June, PSD leader Luis Filipe Montenegro was reappointed as Prime Minister, and the second Montenegro Administration was inaugurated. On May 5, Minister of Culture Dalila Rodrigues attended the Portuguese National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. In September, Prime Minister Montenegro visited Japan—the first visit by a Portuguese Prime Minister in 10 years. At the summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, both sides concurred that they would further develop bilateral relations and issued a joint statement designating the bilateral relationship as a Strategic Partnership. In addition, Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel, who accompanied the Prime Minister, held a meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya and confirmed that both sides would cooperate not only on bilateral relations but also on regional situations and various challenges facing the international community.

Malta: In 2025, Japan and Malta marked the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Malta. In July, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism Ian Borg visited Japan for the official events of the Malta National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, paid a courtesy call on Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi, and held a meeting with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii. Deputy Prime Minister Borg and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii welcomed the exchange of notes concerning the introduction of the Working Holiday scheme between Japan and Malta. The scheme commenced on January 1, 2026.

Monaco: In June, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii held a meeting with Interim Minister of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Isabelle Berro Amadei, who had visited Japan to participate in the Monaco National Day events at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai together with Their Serene Highnesses Prince Albert II of Monaco and Princess Charlene.



[V4]

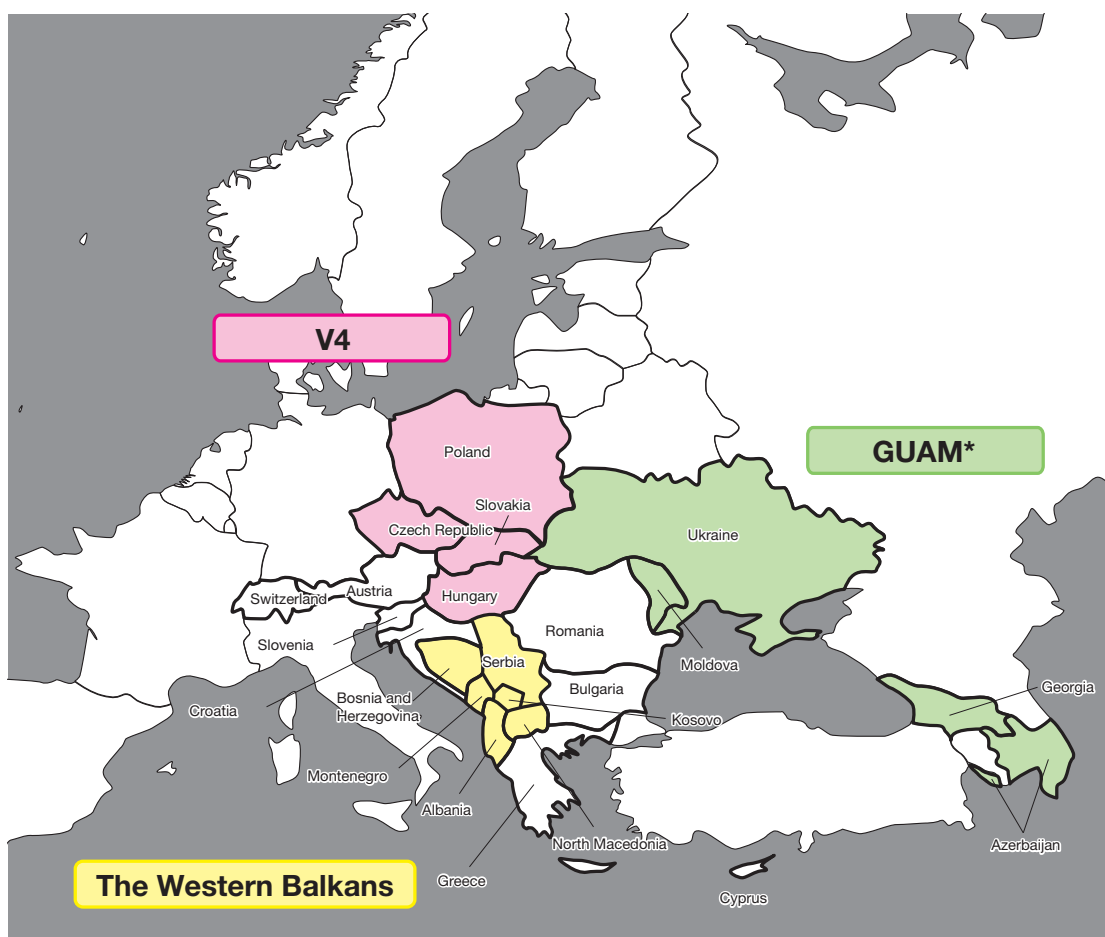
Bilateral relations between Japan and the V4 countries of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary have a long history and are traditionally friendly. Given its geographical proximity to Ukraine, cooperation with the V4 is important for Japan as it continues to support Ukraine. Since the launch of the “V4 plus Japan” dialogue and cooperation framework in August 2003, Japan has been cooperating across a wide range of fields through this framework.

Slovakia: Speaker of the National Council Richard Raši, who visited Japan in September, held meetings with President of the Senate SEKIGUCHI Masakazu and Speaker of the House of Representatives NUKAGA Fukushima. President Peter Pellegrini, who also visited Japan in September on the occasion of the Slovakia National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba.

Czech Republic: In February, President of the Senate Miloš Vystrčil visited Japan at the invitation of the Senate and held informal meetings with President of the Senate Sekiguchi and others, as well as Speaker of the House of Representatives Nukaga, and held a meeting with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi. In July, President Petr Pavel visited Japan to attend the Czech Republic National Day events at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba. In addition, in October, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Marian visited Japan to attend the Ukraine Mine Action Conference, and held a meeting with State Minister for Foreign Affairs KUNITSU Ayano.

Poland: * See 2 (7)

Hungary: President Tamás Sulyok, who visited Japan on the occasion of the Hungary National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai in May, held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba. In September, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó, who visited Japan for the third 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 conflicts between ethnic groups, 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"⁽⁴⁾ 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); and 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.

North Macedonia: In May, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Timčo Mucunski visited Japan on the occasion of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and held a meeting with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii.

Kosovo: In June, President Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu visited Japan on the occasion of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba.

Serbia: In August, Foreign Minister Marko Đurić visited Japan and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya. In September, President Aleksandar Vučić visited Japan on the occasion of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba. Furthermore, in the same month, an agreement in principle on the Japan-Serbia Investment Agreement was reached, and the agreement was signed in December.

Montenegro: In May, Prime Minister Miloško Spajić visited Japan on the occasion of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba.

Cyprus: In August, Vice Speaker of the House of Representatives GEMBA Koichiro visited Cyprus and held meetings with President of the House of Representatives Annita Demetriou and Deputy Minister for European Affairs Marilena Raouna.

Greece: In October, on the occasion of the Ukraine Mine Action Conference, Secretary General for International Economic Affairs Dimitris Skalkos visited Japan and took the floor at the conference. In addition, in December, Minister of National Defense Nikos Dendias visited Japan and held meetings with Minister of Defense KOIZUMI Shinjiro and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kunimitsu.

Croatia: In July, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Gordan Grlić Radman visited Japan on the occasion of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai and held a meeting with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii; he also visited Japan again in October to attend the Ukraine Mine Action Conference and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Moteji. In September, Prime Minister Andrej Plenković visited Japan on the occasion of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai and held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba.

Slovenia: In June, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon, who visited Japan. In addition, in October, on the occasion of the Ukraine Mine Action Conference, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Melita Gabrič, who visited Japan, held a meeting with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kunimitsu.

Romania: In June, Speaker of the House of Representatives Nukaga and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs IKUINA Akiko each held meetings with President of the Senate Mircea Abrudean, who visited Japan to participate in the Romania National Day events at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai.

Bulgaria: In April, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Innovation and Growth Tomislav Donchev visited Japan and attended the opening ceremony of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. In addition, in May, Prime Minister Ishiba held a meeting with President Rumen Radev, who visited Japan to participate in the Bulgaria National Day events at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and signed the "Joint Statement on Establishment of the Strategic Partnership between Japan and the Republic of Bulgaria," upgrading bilateral relations to a new "Strategic Partnership."

Austria: Following the National Council elections in September 2024, and after multiple rounds of coalition negotiations, a three-party coalition government comprising the Austrian People's Party (center-right), the Social Democratic Party (center-left), and NEOS (liberal) was inaugurated in March 2025. With regard to Japan-Austria relations, in May, President Alexander Van der Bellen visited Japan and, through his meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, the occasion served to reaffirm the over-150-year friendship between the two countries. In October, the 27th Meeting of Japan-Austria Committee for Issues of the Future was held in Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture, at which experts from both countries engaged in candid exchanges of information and views on the role of Artificial Intelligence and next-generation energy in regional revitalization. In December, the "Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Austria on Social Security" entered into force, and it is expected to further promote people-to-people and economic exchanges between the two countries.

Switzerland: People-to-people exchanges among dignitaries were invigorated through Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. In April, President of the National Council (lower house) Maja Riniker visited Japan, and in August, President of the Council of States (upper house) Andrea Caroni visited Japan, promoting inter-parliamentary exchanges with both houses of the Diet. Furthermore, in April, on the occasion of Switzerland's National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Ignazio Cassis visited Japan, and through a foreign ministers' meeting, both sides concurred that they would strengthen multifaceted development of bilateral relations, including in the field of science and technology, as well as cooperation in international fora including on the situation in Ukraine.

Moldova: In September, Prime Minister Ishiba held a meeting with Prime Minister Dorin Recean, who visited Japan to participate in the Moldova National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, expressed that the protection of Moldova's democracy is more important than ever and that Japan would support Moldova's development to the greatest extent possible, and the two leaders concurred that the democratic conduct of elections in Moldova was important for regional and international stability.

⁽⁴⁾ 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

The First Conclave in 12 Years and the Inauguration of Pope Leo XIV

Embassy of Japan to the Holy See

Pope Francis, who had been hospitalized in Rome with pneumonia, was discharged in March. On April 20, Easter Sunday, he appeared publicly to bestow his blessing upon the faithful at the Mass celebrating the Resurrection of Christ; however, on the morning of the following day, April 21, his condition suddenly deteriorated and he passed away.

Although the Vatican City State is known as the world's smallest state by area, the funeral held in St. Peter's Square on April 26 drew more than 160 delegations from around the world, including 65 heads of state such as President Donald J. Trump of the United States (U.S.), His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain — a Catholic nation — President Javier Milei of Argentina — the Pope's country of origin — President Sergio Mattarella of Italy, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine. As Japan's representative, Foreign Minister Iwaya attended the funeral and conducted condolence diplomacy with, among others, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Antonio Tajani of Italy, Secretary-General António Guterres of the United Nations, and President Ursula von der Leyen of the European Commission.

Beginning on May 7, a conclave, the papal election to select a new Pope, was held in the Sistine Chapel for the first time in 12 years. On the following day, May 8, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost (Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops) was elected as the first Pope of U.S. origin, taking the name Pope Leo XIV.

On May 18, the Solemn Ceremony of the Inauguration of the Pontificate for His Holiness Pope Leo XIV was held in St. Peter's Square, attended by more than 140 delegations, including 32 heads of state. From Japan, former Prime Minister ASO Taro (Member of the House of Representatives) attended as Ambassador on Special Mission and had an audience with the new Pope Leo XIV, conveying Japan's congratulations directly. He also held informal talks with President Mattarella of Italy, Vice President J.D. Vance of the U.S., Chancellor Friedrich Merz of Germany, Prime Minister Mark Carney of Canada, and others. Through the series of Vatican ceremonies surrounding the passing of the late Pope and the inauguration of the new Pope, Japan was able to demonstrate its presence.

In this way, the papal transition drew representatives from nations around the world to converge on the Vatican, captured the attention of the approximately 1.4 billion Catholics worldwide and the global media, and served as a renewed reminder that the Vatican is a state whose presence in the world extends far beyond its status as the world's smallest nation.

Pope Leo XIV has indicated his intention to carry on the foreign policy of his predecessor, Pope Francis, who was regarded as a reformist. At the same time, he demonstrates a disposition attentive to the traditions of the Catholic Church and regards its unity as an important mission.

Grounded in Catholic doctrine upholding the sanctity of human life and respect for human rights, the Vatican advocates positions such as opposition to abortion, the death penalty, and the humane treatment of migrants. The Holy See also calls for peace wherever there is conflict and takes an active role in developing AI ethics, and in supporting developing countries, particularly those in Africa — areas where its thinking aligns in part with Japan's foreign policy. Japan will work together with the Holy See under the new leadership of Pope Leo XIV to contribute to peace and stability in the international community.



Pope Leo XIV, elected as the new Pope in the conclave (May 9, the Vatican; Photo: ©Vatican Media)



Ambassador on Special Mission Aso conveying Japan's congratulations to Pope Leo XIV (May 18, the Vatican)