Belgium King's Day

Shared views on global issues

Gunther Sleeuwagen AMBASSADOR OF BELGIUM

Japan and Belgium have come a long way together. Many

events embody the outstanding relations between our two countries. Japan and the European Union member Belgium are united by the

shared values on which our societies, economies and political systems are based. These values lie at the heart of our cooperation and

foreign policies. In that framework, 2015 was another year of excellent cooperation. Prime Minister Charles Michel visited Japan and had the honor to be received by His Majesty Emperor Akihito. He also met with Prime Minister Abe and welcomed the notion that both our countries have convergent views with regard to the different global challenges and regional issues that we are confronted with today. Be it on a bilateral or multilateral level, Japan and Belgium work closely together and strive for a better, peaceful world in which all countries can develop, free from external or inter-

Together with Vice Prime Minister Kris Peeters, our prime minister also focused successfully on identifying Belgium as an investment haven for Japanese industries and companies. Belgium is an attractive destination for Japanese investors. Owing to the fact of new investments in the energy and service sectors — the number of Japanese investments in Belgium recently increased to over 300 companies employing more

the launch of a new nonstop direct flight between Japan and Belgium, operated by ANA. This flight will certainly contribute to the reinforcement of business and leisure visits.

Japan and Belgium, which is in goods and services, eliminate

than 29,000 people.
Adding to this, 2015 marked

a founding member of the European Union, also share the determination to build a strengthened relationship between Japan and the EU, the legal basis of which will be both the strategic partnership agreement (SPA) and the free trade agreement (FTA). Whereas the SPA should pave the way for closer political, security and global economic cooperation and a better promotion of our common rules on the world scene, the FTA should allow us to almost fully liberalize trade

Bilateral relations between

non-tariff barriers and achieve a high degree of harmonization of standards and other traderelated rules and regulations.

The negotiations are progressing well and could lead to a successful conclusion provided that the scope and the level of ambition of the agreements are not downgraded. As industrial nations in a free world, such is the determination that both countries need to uphold. The EU is a concept of inte-

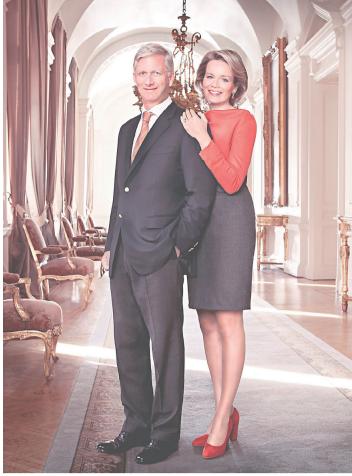
gration where democracy, economic development and stability are cherished and pro-fusely existent. These values need thought, attention and work at all times. For example, the EU is addressing current issues such as migration with a long-term approach. The humanitarian dimension is the most urgent in the short term, but we will also work positively toward a sustainable integration and stabilization of migration matters. European countries have wide experience in constructive integration of migrants. At the global level, it means we have to work together and Belgium is very grateful to Japan for the interest the country is showing in the future development of the European Union.

Japan and Belgium are charac-

terized by long-standing political, relations of friendship and trust, by a dense network of cultural and scientific cooperation and exchanges, by a high-level of trade and by relations of warm friendship between the Imperial house of Japan and the Royal House of Belgium, inherited from previous generations and valued and matured by His Majesty Emperor Akihito and by His Majesty Philippe, King of the Belgians.

Such friendship started officially 149 years ago. So next year in 2016, we will be celebrating 150 years of diplomatic relations. Belgium was the ninth country in the world to sign a treaty with Japan after it opened up to the world in the mid-nineteenth century. This was even before the Meiji revolution, and it was quite an achievement for the small and young Belgium, only 36 years independent and trying to take part in the first wave of global-ization of that period. High level visits, exhibitions, concerts and more both in Japan and in Belgium will highlight the year. We will be very happy to provide with a diversified and high quality program, throughout this beautiful country.

Quality is a key word in the development of our relations.



King Philippe of Belgium and his wife Queen Mathilde © CHANCERY OF THE PRIME MINISTER, DG EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION-PHOTOGRAPHER MICHEL GRONEMBERGER

the driving standard in our products and our services. It is

This search for quality remains ful beer, a nanotech application or a perfectly timed delivery, it is the overall complement of quality in all its dimensions Further strengthening bilateral ties

Takao Kusakari PRESIDENT, JAPAN-BELGIUM SOCIETY

I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of the King's Day of

Belgium and Japan were able to spend another year further strengthening the good bilateral relationship through many exchanges of people between our two countries, including Prime Minister of Belgium Charles Michel's visit to Japan.

On Oct. 25, a direct flight was launched between Tokyo and Brussels. The added convenience of this new flight has

facilitated both business and tourism. After being committed to bilateral exchanges for four years, former Ambassador Luc Liebaut returned home, and his successor the new Ambassador Gunther Sleeuwagen shall continue the work Liebaut began.

In 2016, Japan and Belgium will mark the 150th anniversary of their diplomatic relations, which will be celebrated through many events currently being planned. The official logo has been chosen and it will be visible at various events over the coming year. I sincerely hope the exchanges and cooperation in various areas will be further strengthened on this occasion.

The "Belgian Beer Weekends" have taken root and developed into a nationwide event in Japan being held in seven cities, including Hiroshima, which took part for the first

Bilateral exchanges also deepened in the art field, as seen in Rene Magritte exhibitions this year.

I extend my best wishes for 2016 that many companies, organizations and people will be able to enjoy the 150th anniversary between Belgium and Japan.

applied in Belgium.

I would like to invite you to participate in the commemoranot just the quality of the prod-uct you will enjoy, be it a taste-uct you will enjoy, be it a taste-uct you will enjoy, be it a taste-

tory of development, discovery and cooperation, but more importantly looking forward to a dynamic continuation of these

Ghent is a hidden gem ready to welcome many visitors

Ghent is still a well-kept secret and is definitely worth a visit. Visitors who are already familiar with the city have become loyal ambassadors. Ghent has so much more to offer than the Castle of the Counts and the splendid views of Graslei and Korenlei. It offers a unique combination of authenticity, creativity and natural local flair. What's more, it's a human-scaled city in the heart of Flanders with added value

thanks to its many waterways. What makes Ghent unique? First of all is the city's excellent location. And of course The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb, the tryptych by the Van Eyck brothers that is displayed at St. Bavo's Cathedral. Moreover, Ghent is the only city with a lighting plan, which illuminates the streets and buildings from a different angle. Ghent



Unique lights illuminate Ghent in the evening. VISITGENT

is also home to the festival city of Flanders, boasting the largest outdoor city festival in Europe. And if you're a fan of flowers, you'll undoubtedly know that Ghent hosts a highly prestigious flower exhibition, the Floralies. Last, but not least, which other city has a real castle in its city center?

The 2016 Ghent Floralies In the spring of 2016, Ghent will host a new, dynamic and interactive city festival with the Ghent Floralies (Ghent Flower Show). The Arts Quarter — the Citadel Park, St. Peter's Square, the Leopold Barracks and the Bijloke site will form the setting for a 10-day bustling flower and plant festival with floral art, inspirational gardens, nature-inspired projects and exhibitions. look and admire; they can also experience and participate in interactive workshops.

Celebrating 150 years of Belgium-Japan diplomatic relations and as part of the sister city partnership between Ghent and Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan will be an honored guest of the 2016 Ghent Floralies. Kanazawa will fill a large part of the Bijloke site where floral artists engage in dialogue with an Oriental theme.



In Ghent's old city center, **Gravensteen Castle is seen** from Graslei harbor on the Leie River, along which is splendid architecture from the Middle Ages and lush greenery. VISITGENT

Information provided by VISITFLANDERS/Tourist Office for Flanders & Brussels. visit www.visitflanders.com.



Damien Dome DIRECTOR JAPAN OFFICE, BELGIAN TOURIST OFFICE WALLONIA-BRUSSELS Brussels surprises people with its originality. How many cities combine architectural treasures, such as the Grand Place, the largest collection of the Surrealist genius Rene Magritte, art nouveau and art deco buildings, and the cosmopolitan wonder of the European

Adventures of Tintin." And remember, when you want it, there is refreshing artisan beer waiting for you. Or do you feel like a sweet? Then enter the doors of the best chocolate shops.

Commission? Browse the col-

orful path lined with facades

painted with scenes from such

legendary comic books as "The

The main cities of Wallonia are approximately one hour from Brussels. The most authento conserve the roots of Belgian culture, heritage and gastrono-



A chocolate shop featuring "Manneken Pis" (Little man Pee), an

my. Castles and abbeys converge in these lands, but there is also nature with forests, grottoes, caves and rivers. There is no doubt that their cobblestone streets and old mills will captivate you. In Namur, the capital of Wallonia, the magnificent Citadel awaits you. Walk along the

pedestrian streets of Mons and discover the Grand Place. Visit the Liege Cathedral or Dinant, the birthplace of Adolphe Sax,

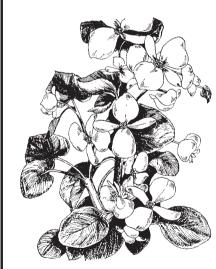
the inventor of the saxophone. In the vicinity of Tournai, the Beloeil Castle will fascinate you. Waterloo, only 30 minutes away by train, is one of Wallonia's

most visited places. The history of Europe was written here.

You will be able to visit La Butte du Lion. Durbuy, or Bouillon, which will remain forever in your memory. We are going to tell you a secret. The city of Spa is a little more than an hour by car from Brussels and has given its name to all of the world's spas. Famous people from time immemorial have gone there for the legendary thermal pools.

Learn about Belgian character; it is distinguished by its humor charged with irony, and above all, for being affable and welcoming. Walloons are accustomed to a nicely set table. You will be able to savor well-seasoned cuisine made with fresh products, a delight for the palate.

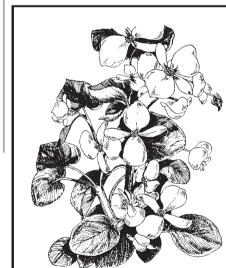
For more information, visit www.belgium-travel.jp



Congratulations on the Belgian King's Day

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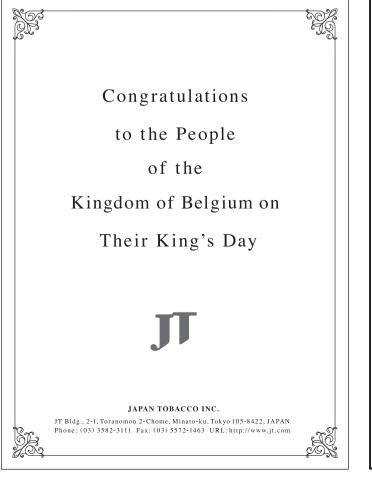


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Congratulations to the People of Belgium on Their King's Day

Nonstop flight Narita-Brussels





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