

Norway National Day Special

Salute to freedom amid specter of war

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Norway's Constitution Day is May 17, when we celebrate the Norwegian Constitution of 1814. For Norwegians, this is a day of joy, of children's parades, music, flags, national costumes

and a lot of ice cream. But it is also a day for remembering our common history and those who died defending our homeland, and for honoring famous writers, politicians, feminists and researchers who influenced and inspired Norwegians to become who we are.

This year's celebration of our democratic and free society takes place while there is an ongoing war in Europe, threatening those very values. The war affects Norway greatly. Both as a member of NATO and as a neighboring country to Russia, Russia's war against Ukraine concerns our entire

society, from our political leaders to Norwegian families living normal lives. The solidarity with Ukraine and its people is strong.

The global security situation today is challenging. Happenings in Europe and in East Asia can no longer be seen as separate issues. It is essential to strengthen our support for global governance and rules-based international cooperation. This characterized the relationship between Norway and Japan while Norway held a seat on the U.N. Security Council in 2021 and 2022. This will continue with Japan on the Security Council this year and next. In parallel, new ties are also created through Japan's closer relationship with NATO.

Human rights, equality and democracy are core values of Norwegian society. However, in an open society, these values may sometimes be met by threats, even terrorism. The terrorist attack against our political freedom in 2011 left scars that are still visible in the center of Oslo. Last year, a man shot and killed two people with the aim of terrorizing the LGBTQ+ community. In both cases, a sea of flowers and a visible

and strong defense of the values under attack was Norwegian society's response. It is indeed essential in today's world to be strong in our support of human rights and universal values. It was a pleasure for the Norwegian Embassy, together with our Nordic colleagues, to join the Tokyo Rainbow Pride parade this year.

The relationship between Norway and Japan is strong and harmonious. This past year, we have finally seen political visits resume, starting with our Minister of Foreign Affairs Anniken Huitfeldt, who attended the state funeral of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe last September. The president of our parliament, Masud Gharahkhani, visited Japan in February, a highlight of a tight parliamentary exchange schedule last winter.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Norway-Japan Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement. Our joint science interests were in fact highlighted in a most splendid way by the arrival of the tall ship Statsraad Lehmkuhl in Japanese waters last year. The ship was circumnavigating the globe on the One Ocean Expedition



The tall ship Statsraad Lehmkuhl demonstrates Norway's dedication to the U.N. sustainable development goals. STATSRaad LEHMKUHL

and had stops in Yokohama, Naha and Ishigaki, giving us ample opportunity to showcase international cooperation to fulfill the U.N. sustainable development goals, especially as related to sustainable ocean management.

The world we live in today faces severe challenges. Norway and Japan's strong collaboration in science and business, support of common values and our broad engagement in multilateral affairs is a great basis for our common engagement for positive change in our societies and in the world.

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This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

Congratulations on Norwegian Constitution Day

 Mitsubishi Corporation