

# Switzerland National Day Special

## Strong ties leading to 2020 and beyond

**JEAN-FRANCOIS PAROZ**  
AMBASSADOR OF SWITZERLAND



Less than two years to go! In the summer of 2020, exactly two years from now, we will celebrate the birth of the Swiss Confederation at the peak of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

I am impressed by Japan's efforts toward the success of the games. Switzerland has engaged in a fruitful partnership with its host towns where sports and cultural exchanges are kicking off in the towns and cities of Oita, Fukushima, Oyamazaki and Fuji. Oita, the location of the world-famous wheelchair marathon, will welcome our record-holding athletes this November.

2020 is also the year of the Cybathlon in Zurich, an international competition for athletes with disabilities assisted by the latest robotic and prosthetic devices. Follow-

ing the 2016 competition, we look forward to welcoming many Japanese teams again. Technology for a more inclusive, diverse society is among the many values our two countries share.

Other common concerns include preserving the rule of law, free trade and the multilateral order embodied by institutions such as the World Trade Organization or the Group of 20. Swiss Confederation President Alain Berset's visit and his successful dialogue with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in April highlighted how much we share in terms of interests and challenges.

Our economic ties are increasingly strong — Switzerland is the seventh-most important foreign investor in Japan, and Japan is the sixth-largest export market for Switzerland. Our free trade agreement, enacted nine years ago, was the first such agreement between Japan and a partner outside Asia. Imports and exports of pharmaceutical products and machinery illustrate our economies' excellent alignment.

Health care, an aging society and competitiveness, were the focal points of the

first Switzerland-Japan Economic Forum, an initiative of the embassy, IMD business school and the Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan, among other partners. Panel discussions took place at the Imperial Hotel, Tokyo, with State Secretary for Education, Research and Innovation Mauro Dell'Ambrogio serving as one of the speakers. The next event is already in the making.

For the eighth year in a row, Switzerland has been recognized as the most innovative economy by the World Intellectual Property Organization, highlighting the "Swiss Made" brand's continual growth and expansion into new territories. For example, entrepreneurs are turning Switzerland into a global hub for drones, with developments extending all the way to Japan.

"Fintech" (financial technology) is another hot term. The region of Zug is home to one of the world's most active startup ecosystems at the forefront of blockchain technologies; Switzerland and Japan are embracing the future together with a new cooperation agreement finalized last April during Finance Minister Ueli



Maurer's visit.

"Swiss Made" at its best is what we want to showcase before, during and beyond the 2020 Games. We are working on an ambitious program that will comprise of facets of Switzerland as diverse as our humanitarian tradition, creative industries, lively folklore, surprising food culture and even a map of all the cities, landscapes or railways in Japan with a connection to Switzerland. Get ready for this grand tour that will lead all the way to the House of Switzerland at the heart of the games. Happy first of August!

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

**Swiss President  
Alain Berset and  
Prime Minister  
Shinzo Abe shake  
hands at the Prime  
Minister's Office in  
Tokyo during Ber-  
set's official visit to  
Japan on April 12.**

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Congratulations  
to the People  
of  
Switzerland  
on the Occasion  
of  
Their National Day



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