

# Belgium King's Day Special

## Relations thriving across many areas

**GUNTHER SLEEUWAGEN**  
AMBASSADOR OF BELGIUM



Bilateral relations between Japan and Belgium are based on shared values and characterized by long-standing political relations of friendship and trust, a dense network

of cultural and scientific cooperation and exchanges, a high-level of trade and strong relations of warm friendship between the Imperial house of Japan and the Royal House of Belgium. This relationship is truly valued and nurtured by His Majesty Emperor Akihito and by His Majesty Philippe, the King of the Belgians, in whose name we are celebrating King's Day today.

In 2018, Japan and the European Union embarked on a new path of intensified cooperation, in which the Belgium-Japan relationship is fully embedded. The economic partnership

agreement and the strategic partnership agreement will both come into force next year and will boost our already strong collaboration.

On top of that, Belgium and Japan are completing the ratification process for a modernized bilateral treaty on the avoidance of double taxation that is also expected to enter into force in 2019.

Our academic cooperation is thriving and we are proud that 60 Japanese universities have cooperation agreements with Belgian universities. At the same time, we are reinvigorating our alumni network in Japan. We are looking forward to the second Symposium on Belgian Studies to be held on Dec. 8, which will showcase the ongoing academic exchanges between Belgium and Japan.

This year was a particularly fruitful one for our cultural exchanges. Tokyo is hosting the exhibition "Rubens and the Birth of the Baroque" at the National Museum of Western Art in Ueno until next January. Belgian avant-garde COBRA painter Pierre Alechinsky was awarded the prestigious "Praemium Imperiale 2018" by the Japan Art Asso-

ciation. In 2019, the Belgian Beer Week-ends will be organized for the 10th consecutive year in several Japanese cities, underlining the appreciation of both countries for quality beer culture.

Next year, the EU will handle the effects of Brexit. Products and services originating from the U.K. will enter the internal market of the EU under different conditions. Belgium, as a founding father of the EU and host of the headquarters of the EU institutions, will remain a safe and productive destination for Japanese overseas investments. Japan is already the second-largest non-EU investor in Belgium and we welcome growing Japanese interest for new investments.

Belgium is eagerly looking forward to the success of the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics in Tokyo. Exactly 100 years before, the city of Antwerp hosted the 1920 Olympics where Japan won its first Olympic medals. Belgium also supports the candidacy of Osaka for the World Expo in 2025.

I invite you to become part of the dynamic future of development, discovery and cooperation between Japan and Belgium.

## Economic ties continue to strengthen

**KIMIKAZU SUGAWARA**  
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-BELGIUM SOCIETY



On the occasion of the King's Day of the Kingdom of Belgium, it is with great pleasure that I express my sincere congratulations.

The Royal Family of Belgium and the Imperial family of Japan have shared a special and close relationship for a long time. We remember vividly the official visit of 2016 where Their Majesties King Philippe and Queen Mathilde and Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko were walking side by side on the red carpet, waving their hands together to the people of Japan. It shows how deeply the two families are

connected, as are the two nations. This *kizuna* (bond) will surely be kept and passed on from generation to generation for many years to come after the Heisei Era ends next year.

The Japan-Belgium Society will mark its 50th anniversary in 2019. The society has been able to be active for such a long time thanks to the generous support from the Embassy of Belgium, Belgian organizations in Japan and last but not least, 72 corporate members and 233 individual members. I would like to thank all of them and ask for their continued assistance to the society.

H.E. Didier Reynders, the deputy prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs, has recently completed an official visit to Japan for about a week. Though he was quite busy with his political and economic agendas, he came to an event hosted by the society to spend some time with our members. It was for only

a short time, but mutual respects were exchanged and confirmed between the minister and our members, representing our very profound, long-term friendships.

When it comes to business, we welcomed the economic partnership agreement that was signed between the EU and Japan in July. This is expected to enter into force next year and create one of the largest free economic zones in the world. Belgium within the EU and Japan as partners will demonstrate the importance of the economic order based on free and fair rules.

I sincerely wish that Belgium and Japan will further develop their close relationship and deepen exchanges in many fields.

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



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko escort Belgium's King Philippe and Queen Mathilde during their state visit to Japan in October 2016. ©BELGA

### Congratulations on the Belgian King's Day

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### Congratulations

on the Belgian King's Day

**JBS**

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

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ON THE BELGIAN KING'S DAY

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