

Switzerland National Day Special

Strong partners at all times

JEAN-FRANCOIS PAROZ
AMBASSADOR OF SWITZERLAND



As the coronavirus pandemic confronts even the most advanced nations with unprecedented challenges, Swiss-Japanese relations continue to thrive.

Early last year, Switzerland, the host country of the Olympic movement, was the first nation to announce its presence in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games with a national pavilion on Cat Street in Shibuya. As today marks 729 years since the signature of the Federal Charter, which symbolizes the determination of Alpine valley communities to stand up for freedom and for each other, we were supposed to celebrate the Swiss National Day in Tokyo in the midst of the mega sporting event.

The public health conditions in the world have led us down a different path.

Coordinated responses at the national and global level, and immunology research are top priorities for Switzerland as for Japan. Our thoughts go to all those suffering from the catastrophe.

The recent developments around free trade, both globally and within the Indo-Pacific region, reinforce the importance of Japan as a partner that shares our values and commitment for a strong multilateral order. Japan represents a pole of stability in a rather unstable region. It is thus one of the eight “priority countries” defined in Swiss foreign policy.

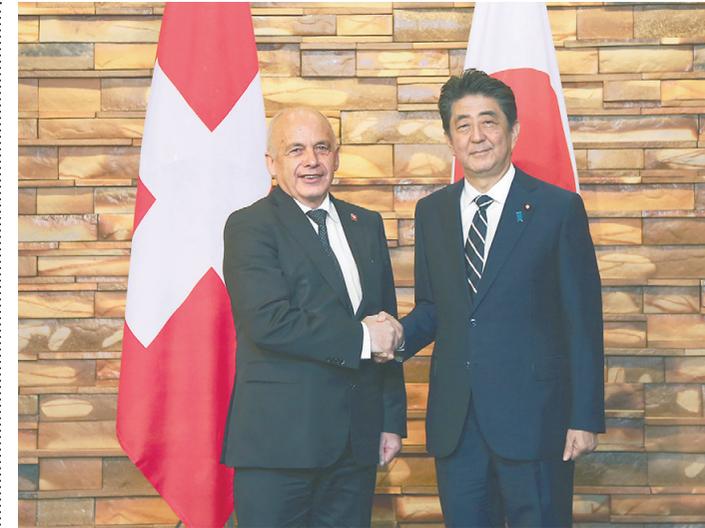
Investment figures speak for the excellence of Swiss-Japanese cooperation. Our bilateral relations have been rooted in business activities since the early 1860s, following a successful Swiss economic mission — which arrived in Japan with a commercial ship, not a military one.

Today, Switzerland is among the seven largest foreign investors in Japan, while Japan also ranks seventh as an export market for Switzerland, counting the European Union as one. Our free trade agreement, in place since 2009, was the first signed by

Japan with a European partner. We look forward to modernizing this important relationship. Furthermore, Switzerland has become the ninth destination for Japanese foreign direct investment worldwide, reflecting the acquisition of ABB Power Grids by Hitachi, a new merger that opens promising technological perspectives.

Yet current border restrictions prevent our corporate leaders to perform essential visits. As Switzerland now allows Japanese citizens to enter our country, we expect equal treatment. In the coming months, Swiss business people needing to travel to Japan should be able to perform these visits, and Swiss citizens with permanent residence status should be allowed to travel back to Switzerland with the right to return to Japan. We are looking forward to dialogue with Japanese authorities on these pressing issues.

In the coming months, we are gearing up for our Switzerland-Japan Economic Forum, and will keep opening new “Doors to Switzerland” along our public diplomacy campaign on the road to the Olympic and Paralympic Games.



President of the Swiss Confederation Ueli Maurer and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in June 2019 AYAKO SUZUKI

The buildup to the games offers a platform to continue fostering our high-level political dialogue, with a presidential visit and several federal councillors planning to travel to Tokyo next year. We have already secured our presence on Cat Street for next summer’s Olympics and look forward to cheering on the athletes and welcoming the public at our House of Switzerland. Let us look together to the future with confidence and responsibility.

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

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



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