

# Switzerland National Day Special

## A 160-year friendship full of vitality

**ANDREAS BAUM**  
AMBASSADOR OF SWITZERLAND



I feel honored to address you on the occasion of Switzerland's National Day. 2024 is a special occasion as we celebrate 160 years of bilateral relations! Our friendship, born in business and

rooted in a pioneering spirit, dates back to 1864 when a Swiss delegation led by watchmaker Aime Humbert-Droz signed the Treaty of Amity and Trade with Japan.

In February, we celebrated this milestone with 300 guests, including Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Masahito Moriyama, at a special reception at the embassy. We showcased historical timepieces from the earliest economic exchanges, enjoyed a mix of yodel and electronic music, and even had a robot serving raclette cheese. It was a night to remember, filled with tradition and innovation.

What's next? President Viola Amherd will arrive in Japan next week for an official visit, including an audience with his majesty the emperor and a summit meeting with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. In today's unstable global geopolitical landscape, Switzerland and Japan are more than ever natural partners who share and uphold similar values: I think of democracy, evidence-based decision-making and a rules-based international order.

This visit will take place at a time when Switzerland is expanding its footprint in Japan. After upgrading our presence in Osaka in 2021 with a consulate dedicated to research and innovation and opening an honorary consulate in Fukuoka last year, Team Switzerland inaugurated an honorary consulate in Higashikawa, Hokkaido, in May, focusing on tourism, sustainability and hospitality. I am confident that our new Honorary Consul Olympic medalist Tomoka Takeuchi will excel in her role.

Trade and business continue to be the bedrock of our relations. Switzerland ranks as the eighth-largest foreign investor in Japan. In turn, Switzerland is the ninth most impor-

tant destination for Japanese investors, who are increasingly attracted by Switzerland's high-performing innovation ecosystem. Science and academia are also crucial pillars of our partnership, and Japan continues to be our largest research partner in Asia based on Swiss National Science Foundation funding.

Not only do we share values and aspirations, we also face similar challenges, including the climate crisis, an aging population and the need to leverage innovation and technology to address these issues.

Throughout this anniversary year, and leading up to the opening of the Swiss Pavilion at the 2025 World Expo in Osaka, our diplomacy program Vitality.Swiss provides a platform for stakeholders and experts from both countries to exchange ideas and explore solutions for a healthier, more sustainable and prosperous future. This autumn, the program will reach its peak during the Swiss Vitality Days, a series of events and initiatives exploring cutting-edge trends in biodiversity, energy and life sciences, as well as gender equality, craftsmanship, art and food. In 2025, the Swiss Pavilion at the expo will continue this



**From left: Member of the House of Representatives and President of the Japan-Switzerland Parliamentary Friendship League Seishiro Eto, model and photographer Basil Kraher, TV personality Haruka Christine, ballet dancer Mizuka Ueno, Swiss Ambassador Andreas Baum and Education Minister Masahito Moriyama attend an event celebrating the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and Japan in Tokyo on Feb. 6.** AYAKO SUZUKI

inspiring and fruitful dialogue with Japan and the world toward more vital societies.

From watchmaking to automation, from trade to diplomacy, from Heidi to high tech, this is the story we celebrate throughout the year. More than ever, the Swiss-Japanese partnership aims at shaping our common tomorrow. As my mission to Tokyo comes to an end and I sadly say goodbye, I leave with the conviction that the time has come to bring our bilateral relations to the next level. An even deeper, future-defining friendship between Japan and Switzerland lies within our reach.

*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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